THE GREAT ARTISTS

00023633

NOT TO BE ISSUED OUT WITHOUT PERMISSION.

SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS

BOMBAY BRANCH

OF THE

Royal Asiatic Society.

Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 18 July, 2018

ILLUSTRATED BIOGRAPHIES OF THE GREAT ARTISTS.

23633
a

SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS

ILLUSTRATED BIOGRAPHIES OF THE GREAT ARTISTS.

The following volumes, each illustrated with from 14 *to* 20 *Engravings, are now ready, price* 3*s.* 6*d.*

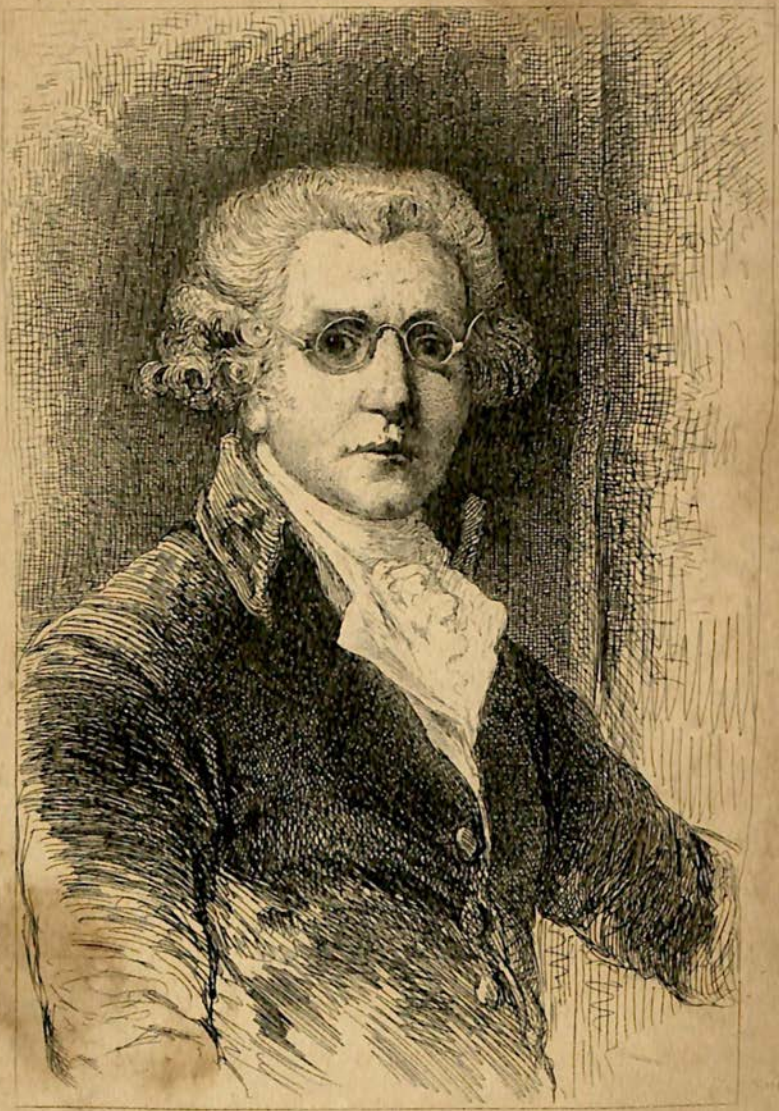
LEONARDO DA VINCI. By Dr. J. PAUL RICHTER.
MICHELANGELO. By CHARLES CLEMENT.
RAPHAEL. From J. D. PASSAVANT. By N. D'ANVERS.
TITIAN. By RICHARD FORD HEATH, M.A., Oxford.
TINTORETTO. By W. ROSCOE OSLER. From researches at Venice.
HOLBEIN. From Dr. A. WOLTMANN. By JOSEPH CUNDALL.
THE LITTLE MASTERS OF GERMANY.[1] By W. B. SCOTT.
REMBRANDT. From CHARLES VOSMAER. By J. W. MOLLETT.
RUBENS. By C. W. KETT, M.A., Oxford.
VAN DYCK and HALS. By PERCY R. HEAD, Lincoln Coll., Oxford.
FIGURE PAINTERS OF HOLLAND. By LORD RONALD GOWER, F.S.A.
VERNET and DELAROCHE. By J. RUUTZ REES.
HOGARTH. By AUSTIN DOBSON.
REYNOLDS. By F. S. PULLING, M.A., Oxford.
TURNER. By W. COSMO MONKHOUSE.
LANDSEER. By FREDERICK G. STEPHENS.

The following volumes are in preparation.

FRA ANGELICO. By CATHERINE M. PHILLIMORE.
FRA BARTOLOMMEO. By LEADER SCOTT.
VELAZQUEZ. By EDWIN STOWE, M.A., Oxford.
GAINSBOROUGH. By G. M. BROCK ARNOLD, M.A., Oxford.
ALBRECHT DÜRER. By RICHARD FORD HEATH, M.A.
GIOTTO. By HARRY QUILTER, M.A., Trinity Coll., Cambridge.

---

[1] An *Edition de luxe*, containing 14 extra plates from rare engravings in the British Museum, bound in Roxburgh style, may be had, price 10*s.* 6*d.*



SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS.

"The whole world without Art would be one great wilderness."

SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS

BY F. S. PULLING, M.A.,

EXETER COLLEGE, OXFORD.

LONDON:

SAMPSON LOW, MARSTON, SEARLE, & RIVINGTON,

CROWN BUILDINGS, FLEET STREET.

1880.

927.592
Ray/Pul/Sir
23633

(*All rights reserved.*)

Hazell, Watson, & Viney, Printers, London & Aylesbury.

PREFACE.

PROBABLY there is no artist who has had more biographers than Sir Joshua Reynolds, nor is there any name in the list of England's great painters better known than that of the first President of the Royal Academy. Shortly after his death his pupil Northcote and his friend Malone put forth lives of Reynolds, both of which are extremely valuable as original authorities. They were succeeded by Farrington and Beechey, both artists themselves, but who have in their turn been supplanted by the magnificent work begun by Mr. Leslie and completed by Mr. Tom Taylor. It is to this latter book that all future biographers of Sir Joshua must go for materials. It is a perfect mine of information, and no praise can be too high for the careful and diligent manner in which the authors have collected from all sources information about the great master. But it is an unfortunate book; it professes to treat of the "Life and Times,"—a thing fatal to true biography, and only to be tolerated in the life of a man who helped to make

the history of his own times. The result of this injudicious treatment is that the "Times" swamp the "Life"; contemporary gossip, sketches of society when George the Third was king, occupy the major portion of these bulky volumes. The frame hides the picture it contains, and by its own beauty and attractiveness takes the eye off that to which attention should be exclusively directed.

But it hardly becomes me to criticise a work from which I have derived so much assistance, and without which a great deal of the information I here lay before my readers must have been withheld.

I must also acknowledge my obligations to two valuable articles on Reynolds which appeared in the *Quarterly Review* for April and July, 1866, and to Messrs. Redgrave's "Century of Painters."

My own work has no pretence to originality. All I have endeavoured to do is to sum up in a short form the results of the investigations of others, and to arrive at just conclusions respecting the merits of Sir Joshua's work.

The more I have studied it, the more I feel the extreme beauty of his character; he is almost faultless. And this perhaps makes the biographer's task more difficult. The nineteenth century looks with suspicion on the "blameless" man; there must, it thinks, be something in the background,—some skeleton in the cupboard, which should be revealed in all its hideousness, but which the partial biographer is carefully concealing. But such is not the case with Reynolds. The veriest

Smellfungus who ever delighted to blacken a great man's character has been unable to find anything here to gratify his morbid taste. In the roll of England's great men there is not one whose fame is more unsullied, whose example is nobler, than Sir Joshua Reynolds. His life is worthy of study, his character of imitation, by any one who would be as he was—an upright, courteous, God-fearing English gentleman.

F. S. P.

OXFORD, *June*, 1880.

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

A.D. 1723 TO A.D. 1748.

PAGE

Birth and Early Life—First Pictures—Apprenticed to Hudson—Death of his Father—William Gandy. 1

CHAPTER II.

A.D. 1749 TO A.D. 1764.

Commodore Keppel—Visit to Italy—Return to England—Dr. Johnson—Garrick—First Exhibition of Pictures in 1760—Portraits of Nobility 11

CHAPTER III.

A.D. 1764.

Reynolds and his Friends—The Club—Dr. Johnson—Boswell—Burke—Goldsmith—Mayor of Plympton Earl 28

CHAPTER IV.

A.D. 1765 TO A.D. 1775.

Portrait—The Royal Academy founded—Reynolds is knighted—Northcote—Honours from Oxford—Gainsborough and Romney. 34

CHAPTER V.

A.D. 1776 TO A.D. 1783.

The Dilettanti Society—New College Chapel—First Academy Exhibition—Opie—Barry. 62

CHAPTER VI.

A.D. 1784 TO A.D. 1792.

Mrs. Siddons as the Tragic Muse—The Infant Hercules—The Boydell Gallery—Failure of Sight—Quarrel with the Academy—Dr. Johnson's Monument—Death of Reynolds 77

CHAPTER VII.

LITERARY WORKS.

The Idler—The Discourses—Journey to the Low Countries—Imaginary Dialogues 100

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.

	PAGE
PORTRAIT OF HIMSELF	FRONTISPIECE
PENELOPE BOOTHBY	15
KITTY FISHER	22
THE INFANT SAMUEL JOHNSON	30
THE SNAKE IN THE GRASS	36
UGOLINO	42
THE STRAWBERRY GIRL	46
MUSCIPULA	56
THE HOLY FAMILY	60
CHARLES JAMES FOX	78
MRS. SIDDONS AS "THE TRAGIC MUSE"	80
THE DUCHESS OF DEVONSHIRE	82
AGE OF INNOCENCE	84
MRS. BRADYLL	86
SIMPLICITY	88
LADY POWIS	92
THE INFANT HERCULES	114

BIBLIOGRAPHY.

THE WORKS OF SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS, KNIGHT. In three volumes, to which is prefixed an Account of the Life and Writings of the Author, by Edmond Malone, Esq. Second edition, corrected. London, 1798.

MEMOIRS OF SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS, KNIGHT, etc. By James Northcote, Esq., R.A. London, 1813.

MEMOIRS OF THE LIFE OF SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS, with some Observations on his Talents and Character. By Joseph Farrington, R.A. London, 1819.

THE COMPLETE WORKS OF SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS, with an Original Memoir and Anecdotes of the Author. In three volumes. London, 1824.

THE LITERARY WORKS OF SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS. To which is prefixed a Memoir of the Author, with some Remarks on his Professional Character, illustrative of his Principles and Practice. By William Beechey, R.A. London, 1835.

SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS AND HIS WORKS. Gleanings from his Diary, Unpublished Manuscripts, and from other Sources. By William Cotton, M.A.; edited by John Burnet, F.R.S. London and Plymouth, 1856.

LIFE AND TIMES OF SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS, with Notices of some of his Contemporaries. Commenced by Charles Robert Leslie, R.A.; continued and concluded by Tom Taylor, M.A. In two volumes. London, 1865.

CHRONOLOGY

OF

SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS.

DATE.

1723. Born at Plympton. (July 16.)
1740. Apprenticed to Hudson.
1744. First settlement in London.
1746. His father's death.
1749. Sails for Italy.
1752. Returns from Italy.
1753. Settles in London.
1760. First Exhibition.
1762. Visit to Devonshire with Johnson.
1764. The Club established.
1768. The Royal Academy founded.
1769. Knighted.
1773. Mayor of Plympton.
1781. First Tour in the Low Countries.
1782. Paralytic stroke.
1783. Second visit to the Low Countries.
1789. Partial blindness.
1790. Rupture with the Academy.
1792. Dies in London. (Feb. 23.)

SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS.

CHAPTER I.

(A.D. 1723 TO A.D. 1748.)

BIRTH AND EARLY LIFE.

FOUR miles from Plymouth, on the same river which gives that seaport its name, is the old-world town of Plympton Earl, owing at the present day whatever importance it has to its vicinity to the 'Three Towns,' but once by no means dependent on such a humble title for fame. For as an old west country distich tells us,—

> 'Plympton was a market-town
> When Plymouth was a fuzzy down,'

and the ruins of its strongly-situated castle show that, in bygone days, it must have been of renown, and no insignificant possession of the great earls of Devon, who have bequeathed their title to this town on the Plym. Even in later days Plympton Castle played its part in history, for Prince Maurice made it his head-quarters in 1643, when he was besieging Plymouth, and next year its little garrison made a brave though ineffectual resistance to Essex and the Parliamentary forces.

But the visitor to Plympton will seek out first and linger longest at the grammar school, for here it was that the greatest of English painters was born. The Reynolds family had long been settled in Devonshire, and could count amongst its members two men who had in their day and generation been worthy of renown. Of these the one was a staunch Romanist, and during the brief Catholic reaction gained the reward of his constancy by being appointed Dean of Exeter while greater honours were in store for him, when the tide turned and Protestantism once more became the State religion. The other and better known, Dr. Reynolds, was a sturdy Puritan, who took part in the Hampton Court Conference, where he advocated Presbyterian views, much to the disgust of James I., to whom the "No bishop, no king" formula was an inference not to be impugned. Unsuccessful though he was in his endeavours to puritanise the Church, Dr. Reynolds left behind him a lasting monument of his skill in divinity; for he ranks as one of the translators of our Bible. Whether Sir Joshua could claim kindred with the Catholic or the Puritan divine, it is impossible to say: what we do know for certain of his lineage is that his grandfather was John Reynolds, vicar of St. Thomas', Exeter, and his father Samuel Reynolds, master of Plympton grammar school.

A kindly and genial man this Samuel Reynolds would seem to have been,—perhaps not very energetic or business-like, and more suited to the quiet, leisurely ways of the eighteenth century than to the more stirring, bustling days we live in. From him, we may imagine, Joshua inherited that placid and equable temper which was one of his most noted characteristics, and which was equally proof against the fierce attacks of unsuccessful rivals like Barry, and the brusque outspokenness of friends like Johnson.

Mr. Reynolds had already five children when, on July 16th, 1723, a son was born to him who received the name of Joshua, probably after his father's brother, the Rev. Joshua Reynolds; though Malone tells us that the name was given him from a

notion of his father's that it might, at some future period, be an advantage to a child to bear an uncommon Christian name, which might recommend him to the attention and kindness of some person bearing the same name, who might be led even to become a benefactor.

We are always glad to learn particulars of the early education of any man who has distinguished himself in politics or in science, in art or in literature. Not unnaturally we inquire how it was that his talent was first discovered, how his early efforts were directed, and whether his success was marked from the beginning. But how apt we are to exaggerate the precocious efforts of genius, forgetful that it is not always the infant Solomon who proves the wisest man, nor the head boy of the school who succeeds the best in after life, nor the senior wrangler who adorns the woolsack!

Who has not noticed that silent plodding James often makes his mark, while brilliant Jack's home reputation is all the fame he ever earns? And so when James has his life or memoirs written, every saying of his early days that can be remembered is faithfully recorded, every action of his boyhood recounted and glorified; while poor Jack's *bons mots* and bold exploits live only perchance in the recollection of a favourite sister whose hero he was, and, in spite of failure, still is.

It is not every boy who makes speeches in the nursery, or chops logic with his governess, but there is scarcely a child who does not show some inclination for drawing, who is not at some period the proud possessor of a paint-box, and whose fond parents have not discovered the genius of an artist in the baby dauber. But Art is for the few, and many a child who has been wholly given up to her worship at the age of six, in the short space of a year has inconstantly abandoned her for the more boisterous deity who presides over cricket. Nay, more: the lad who declares that he too will be a painter very frequently ends in becoming a lawyer or a merchant, and a humble but meritorious member of society.

Still, it is unquestionable that a painter, like a poet, is born, not made, and as the latter must lisp in numbers, so must the artist reproduce the human form divine, even though it be in charcoal on a whitewashed wall.

The stories told of Reynolds' taste for art are certainly remarkable, for not only did he copy the engravings in Dryden's "Plutarch" and Cat's "Book of Emblems" (this any child might have done), but he had the patience to read through the Jesuits' "Perspective," a somewhat ponderous quarto volume, and, if we are to believe Malone, at the age of eight he had made himself so completely master of it that he never afterwards had occasion to study any other treatise on that subject! More than this, he gave a proof that he had not studied his subject in vain by drawing the quaint old piazza of the Plympton school-house so correctly as to lead his father to assert that it was wonderful, and clearly proved the truth of the boast the author of the "Perspective" made in his preface, that by observing the rules laid down in his book a man might do wonders. It was probably after this that Reynolds perused Richardson's "Treatise on Art," the author of which, living as he did at a time when English art was beneath contempt and her devotees were Grub-street hacks without either talent or education, was sanguine enough to look forward hopefully to the day when there should be at least one real painter in England. No doubt the reading of such a book as this must have inspired the youthful artist, though as yet there was no prospect of his following painting as a profession. The education he was receiving was probably of the old-fashioned kind which flourished in our schools before the age of cram and competition, and which only pretended to give its scholars a sound knowledge of Latin, and the rudiments of Greek and the mathematics. But that this learning would suffice is clearly shown in Sir Joshua's case, for it was probably all he ever got, and yet he could hold his own with Burke and Johnson, and wrote such English as neither of those great masters of style would have been ashamed of.

His father had intended him for the medical profession; and the remark he made to Northcote when at the zenith of his fame, that had it been decided that he should be a doctor "he should have felt the same determination to become the most eminent physician as he then felt to be the first painter of his age," has been frequently cited to show his wonderful resolution to excel,—as if every boy worth anything did not make up his mind to rise to the top of his profession, whether that be the woolsack, the archbishopric, or the presidential chair of the Royal Academy. Doubtless Reynolds would have become an eminent surgeon, had medicine been selected as his profession; his name would have lived perchance in Boswell as that of an admirer of Johnson; but England would have lost her greatest painter.

Probably the success of Hudson as a portrait-painter first suggested to Samuel Reynolds the possibility of his son's embracing Art as a profession. Hudson was a Devonshire man, he had won his way almost unaided, and now he was the first portrait-painter, and was, report said, rapidly amassing a large fortune. Might not young Joshua Reynolds humbly tread in this great man's footsteps, and at all events acquire a modest competency by handing down to posterity the faces of Devonshire squires and Plymouth aldermen? At all events the idea was worth a thought, and the successful painter might not be unwilling to do a kind turn to a young west-countryman. But before this idea occurred to the worthy schoolmaster, Joshua had done something more than make a drawing of the grammar school: he had painted some of the neighbours, and had succeeded tolerably. The story which attaches to his first attempt at portrait-painting is worth the telling. The great family at Mount Edgcumbe had always been on friendly terms with the Plympton schoolmaster, and young Dick Edgcumbe seems to have been in some sort a playfellow of Joshua's, —at all events it was at his instigation that Reynolds made a sketch of worthy Mr. Smart, the tutor, as he was preaching in

Maker church; the drawing made, the two lads hastened down to the beach, and finding a part of an old boat-sail, converted it into a "canvas," and thereupon did the future President paint his first portrait. This production still exists; and so it is that to a schoolboy's pique this honest clergyman owes his immortality, and Reynolds his introduction to the world as a portrait-painter.

But Mr. Reynolds hears that Hudson requires £120 premium with every pupil; and where is the poor parson, with his ten children and his miserable pittance, to raise this sum? Recourse is had to a mutual friend, one Mr. Cutcliffe of Bideford, who for his good offices on this occasion deserves a place in the life of Reynolds; and eventually Hudson consents to receive Joshua as a pupil on very easy terms. "Everything," writes Samuel Reynolds, in his delight at the generous proposal, "jumped out in a strange, unexpected manner to a miracle. . . I shall always be his (Mr. Hudson's) humble servant with abundance of thanks."

So the matter is settled, and on October 13th, 1740, after "a most prosperous journey," Joshua arrived in London, and shortly afterwards took up his abode with Hudson in Great Queen's Street, Lincoln's Inn.

Everything is most satisfactory. "Joshua," writes his father in December, "is very sensible of his happiness in being under such a master, in such a family, in such a city, and in such an employment"; and in August 1742 he tells Mr. Cutcliffe that "as for Joshua, nobody, by his letters to me, was ever better pleased in his employment, in his master, in everything. 'While I am doing this I am the happiest creature alive,' is his expression."

Of this period of his life we know little or nothing; he was probably hard at work mastering the technicalities of his art, becoming daily more expert with his brush, and perhaps less inclined to regard Hudson as a great master. And really but little can be said for Hudson: he is mediocrity itself, and his

portraits have as little claim to be considered in the history of English art as Yalden's or Montgomery's verses to notice in a literary history. Whether they are correct likenesses we have no means of determining; we *do* know that they are execrable pictures.

Reynolds was to have remained with Hudson four years, but as it was he quitted him before two years were over. To what this is to be attributed is doubtful. Probably either to jealousy on the part of the master, or disgust on the part of the pupil. The commonly-received story is, that Hudson being chagrined at the rapid progress Reynolds was making, and fearing that he would prove a dangerous rival, caught at the first frivolous excuse that offered itself to get rid of the young genius. The proverbial jealousy of artists might incline us to believe this, but it may be considered fairly disproved by a letter of Samuel Reynolds, in which he says that he shall persevere in his resolution not to meddle in the controversy between Joshua and his master, adding, "In the meantime I bless God, and Mr. Hudson . . . for the extreme success that has attended Joshua hitherto." Clearly, then, his father did not think that Joshua had suffered much at his master's hands. Indeed, Reynolds had good reason to be thankful that he had done with Hudson; he had learnt all he could from him, and it might have been well nigh fatal had he remained any longer under his roof. Instead of founding an English school, he might have contentedly followed Richardson and Hudson, and produced "honest similitudes," instead of pictures.

Returning to Devonshire, he sets up as a portrait-painter in what was then known as Plymouth Dock, but has now got the name of Devonport, and here he succeeded beyond all expectation. His hands are full of work, and all the notables of the neighbourhood are flocking to the young artist's studio. But it was only a temporary mania: the worthy Devonians soon returned to more "practical" ways of spending their money, and, as usual, Philistia triumphed.

Not unwillingly, perhaps, Reynolds goes back to London, convinced that it is there only that his genius can become known, and there only that he can study great pictures and perfect himself in his art. The quarrel with Hudson is made up, for Reynolds was one of those men who rarely make and never keep an enemy, and we learn from one of his father's letters that "Joshua by his master's means is introduced into a club composed of the most famous men in their profession;" and in another letter that "Joshua's master is very kind to him; he comes to visit him pretty often, and freely tells him where his pictures are faulty, which is a great advantage; and when he has finished anything of his own, he is pleased to ask Joshua's judgment, which is a great honour." This introduction to the Artists' Club must have been a great boon to Reynolds, who, as we know from Dr. Johnson, was one of the most "clubable" of men; but whether Hudson's advice about his pictures was so desirable is more than doubtful; at all events, the portraits of this period have a wooden and conventional appearance only too suggestive of his old master. We must except, however, from this category a portrait of himself, probably the first he ever painted, which Mr. Taylor describes as without a "trace of Hudson," but "masterly in handling, and powerful—almost Rembrandtesque—in *chiaroscuro*."

To this period (from December 1744 to December 1746) belong moreover a few portraits in which we can see the pupil struggling against the thraldom of his master. The most important are those of Captain Hamilton and Mrs. Field, and the picture which bears the name of "The Reading Boy."

In December 1746 he returned home once more, this time to watch by the deathbed of his father, who expired on Christmas Day.

No one who has read Samuel Reynolds' letters can doubt how keenly his death was mourned. His sincere yet manly gratitude, his kindly interest in his son's career, his gentle

humour, all show a most lovable disposition, and make him a most interesting type of the best kind of parson of the eighteenth century. He has been likened to Parson Adams, and in many respects he resembles Fielding's hero. He has the same warm heart, the same simplicity, the same guilelessness, and, we must add, the same straitened purse.

The father's death broke up the home at Plympton, and, not without a sigh of regret at having to leave London, Joshua once more determined to try his fortunes in Plymouth Dock, where he took a house for himself and two of his sisters. Who could have supposed that in Devonshire he was to meet with a master who was to teach him more than he could ever have learnt from Hudson and the whole of his club? Yet so it was. This man was William Gandy.

His father had been a pupil of Vandyck, and a painter of some reputation in his day, but the son possessed something more than the father,—injured genius. His portraits, painted though they were very frequently hurriedly and carelessly, display a knowledge of art and a beauty of conception which prove that with but a moderate amount of patience and perseverance Gandy's name might have been illustrious in the annals of English art. But his dissipated and reckless habits prevented this, and the highest honour that can be accorded to him is that he showed Reynolds what might be done. The truth of Gandy's maxim that "a picture ought to have a richness in its texture, as if the colours had been composed of cream and cheese," was at once perceived by Reynolds, and every picture he painted subsequently to this is a proof of the influence it had over him. No longer do we find that "hard and husky or dry manner," that stiffness and conventionality of attitude which too often characterise his earlier portraits, but in their place ease and naturalness, vigour and beauty unsurpassed and unsurpassable. There are few pictures which we can certainly attribute to Reynolds' second sojourn in Devonshire. A portrait of himself, now in the National Portrait Gallery, in which

he is represented as in the act of painting, and a very fine one of Lady Somers, are the only two of any importance that belong to this period; and probably family business, want of encouragement, and it may be idleness, prevented his getting through much work. Still these years 1747 and 1748 were by no means thrown away, for in addition to what he had learnt from Gandy he studied landscape, and where could it better be studied than in Devonshire? One thing alone was now wanting to complete his artistic training,—he must go to Italy.

CHAPTER II.

(A.D. 1749 TO A.D. 1764.)

ITALY—FIRST SUCCESSES.

AT the beginning of 1749 nothing seemed less likely than that Reynolds, straitened as he must have been in means, from having to support his two sisters, should be able before the year was out to visit the country of Raphael and Titian, and study in Roman and Florentine galleries. And indeed this visit of his to Italy was the result of one of those happy chances which one finds not unfrequently occur in the lives of great men. The famous Admiral Keppel,—then only four-and-twenty, and a Commodore,—had been appointed to the command of the Mediterranean squadron, and on his way from Spithead put into Plymouth harbour for repairs. While there he made the young painter's acquaintance at the house of Lord Edgcumbe, and was not long in discovering that the one object of Reynolds' life at that period was to visit Italy. With graceful patronage Keppel offered to take him there in his own ship, the *Centurion*. The proposal was readily accepted, and in May 1749 they set sail.

Keppel's first business was with the Dey of Algiers, whose corsair vessels were the terror of every civilised country. Algerine pirates swarmed in the Mediterranean, and even penetrated to the English Channel, attacking merchantmen and seizing the unfortunate sailors as slaves. Often before this

had "that nest of thieves" been attacked, prisoners released, and treaties made whereby piracy should be repressed; but directly the English ships were out of sight the slave-trade commenced again, and was in reality never suppressed till, fifty years after this date, an English fleet under Lord Exmouth destroyed for ever the Algerine power.

Keppel found the usual difficulties to be encountered in negociating with Oriental potentates. The story is one of delay, evasion, and vacillation; and it was two years before anything definite was settled. Meanwhile Reynolds, whose pleasant manners and many accomplishments gained him friends wherever he went, had settled down at Port Mahon as the honoured guest of General Blakeney, the governor of Minorca. Here he remained till December, painting the portraits of all the leading men on the station, his visit to the island being prolonged by an untoward accident he met with while riding, the mark of which he bore for life in the shape of a scar on his upper lip.

From Minorca he sailed to Leghorn, and thence made his way to the goal of his desires—Rome. We can imagine how eagerly he must have hurried to see with his own eyes those masterpieces of Raphael of which he had dreamed so often, and for a sight of which he had longed so earnestly. But his first feeling was one of bitter disappointment. Could this be Raphael's work? Where were the mellow tints, the rich colouring he had hoped to see? Everything was sombre, insipid, and tame. How was it? Was Raphael a grossly overrated mediocrity, or was Reynolds ignorant of the first principles of his art? He gives us the answer himself. "Every painter," he said to Northcote, "has some favourite branch of the art which he looks at in a picture; and, in proportion as that part is well or ill executed, he pronounces his opinion upon the whole. One artist looks for colouring, another for drawing, another for handling." It was for excellence in the first of these that Reynolds had looked at Raphael, and so his disappointment is explained. For after all our painter's training was by no means

complete. He had learnt something from Hudson, something from Gandy, something no doubt from study in London and Devonshire. But as yet his taste was not thoroughly developed; the more striking beauties of colour and tone appealed to him far more than the delicate graces of form and proportion. It was in Italy alone that he could be taught that the perfect painter must be no mere colourist, any more than a simple anatomist. Mellowness of tone will not compensate for want of proportion, and the painter who neglects form and expression will inevitably be himself neglected.

Reynolds had not come to Italy to carp at the great masters: he was there to perfect his own education. His non-appreciation of Raphael showed that he lacked something, and that something he must gain, or he would never excel. He had much to unlearn, as he himself admits: "All the indigested notions which I had brought with me from England were to be totally done away with, and eradicated from my mind." In their place true ideas of art sprang up, and as his critical faculty became sounder, his pictures became better.

Reynolds spent two years in Rome, studying, and occasionally copying pictures on commission. He does not appear to have done much original work; all that we find noticed are certain caricatures of persons then resident in Rome. His Italian note-books have been preserved, and contain many admirable hints and critical remarks which show how keen an observer he was, and illustrate most admirably the growth of his critical powers. His studies in the Vatican cost him dear, for a cold caught in its draughty corridors resulted in a deafness which prevented his being able to join in conversation without the aid of an ear-trumpet.

In April 1752 Reynolds left Rome, and spent four months in visiting Florence, Venice, and other Italian cities. As was his wont, he made careful notes of all the most important pictures he saw; and, though there is more of description than criticism in them, his remarks exhibit a just appreciation of

various excellencies, and a true critical spirit differing *in toto* from the crude connoisseurship of the age.

After spending three months with his old Devonshire friends, in January 1753 Reynolds once more settles down in London as a portrait-painter. His success is assured at once. His old friend and patron Lord Edgcumbe recommends him to all his acquaintance, Hudson renews his intimacy with him, and the artistic club welcomes back its old member. In narrating the life of Reynolds we have to record no long series of struggles for fame, no instances of neglect, no want of encouragement; all goes smoothly with him, he is emphatically a thriving, prosperous man; never can he complain that he is not appreciated, that inferior rivals are preferred before him, or that a jealous clique prevents his receiving the honours that are his due. True, he was the founder of a new school, the apostle of a new creed; but the old style had but few admirers, and though Ellis might perhaps find some who would agree with him in coupling Kneller and Shakespeare together, no one who pretended to any artistic culture would assert that he had got his ideal painter in Hudson or Cotes. There was room for a new artist, for one who would dare to despise conventionality and follow Raphael rather than Kneller. The one great painter then alive, Hogarth, had long ago given up portraiture; his genius was in the truest sense humorous, and caricature rather than likeness was his *forte*. Between him and Reynolds there could be no possible rivalry. Reynolds was emphatically a portrait-painter, and he had that deep insight into human character which is essential to success in this art. Hudson and his fellows had produced likenesses which no doubt represent fairly enough the actual look of the sitter at the moment the picture was completed, but there is a total absence of soul and feeling such as in our own days we should scarcely expect in a photograph. In Reynolds' portraits, on the other hand, we find that "spirituality" and that "naturalness" which render them of the greatest interest to those who do not even care to inquire

P. 1.

PENELOPE BOOTHBY.

the name of the actual sitter. Who asks who Miss Penelope Boothby was? Sufficient is it that in her childish coquetry and arch simplicity she is the type of fresh young life in the eighteenth century. That such could ever be the case had never occurred to those critics who, no doubt sincerely, lamented that Reynolds had sadly fallen off since he went to Italy. Fortunately the world at large did not think so, and before 1783 was over Reynolds was thoroughly established, his commissions were almost more than he could execute, and he had boldly raised his prices till they equalled those of Hudson.

At this time he is living in Great Newport Street with his sister Fanny, a strange companion, whose nervous restlessness, "habitual perplexity of mind and irresolution of conduct," contrast so curiously with the placid and equable temper of her brother; and it is a striking proof of his unflagging good temper that he put up with her society for so many years, even though she used to produce copies of his pictures which he said "make other people laugh, and me cry."

In 1753 he painted, amongst others, two of the beautiful Miss Gunnings, then respectively Duchess of Hamilton and Countess of Coventry; but the great picture of the year, and the one which established his reputation beyond dispute, was a portrait of his old friend Keppel. A study of this picture will illustrate what has been said above of the "spirituality" of Reynolds' portraits and of his insight into character. He had known Keppel well, and had recognised his intrepidity and resolution. His bold attitude towards the truculent Dey, who had threatened him with the bow-string, had made a lasting impression on the painter. How should he represent his friend so as to best illustrate his character? Happily an incident in Keppel's own career furnished Reynolds with the idea which he has so nobly embodied. Some years before, the sailor had been shipwrecked on the French coast, and under these trying circumstances had preserved sufficient coolness and presence of mind to rescue the greater portion of his crew.

In the portrait we find him represented walking rapidly along a wild rocky shore, his face and mien determined and resolute in the midst of the tempest which is raging round him. There is animation in every line, the whole figure is full of life; one hand on his sword, the other stretched out in a gesture of command, he looks every inch a hero.

Mr. Leslie notes with regard to this picture that the attitude is taken from that of a statue of which Reynolds had made a copy, and perhaps there never was an artist who borrowed more from others. Yet Reynolds was no plagiarist, unless indeed we are to apply that appellation to Shakespeare because he drew the materials for that most charming of comedies, *As You Like It*, from a tedious pastoral tale by Lodge, or to Mr. Tennyson, who has sifted the gold from the dross of the "Mort d'Arthur" and stamped it out into the noble "Idylls of the King."

This portrait did more for Reynolds than all Lord Edgecumbe's recommendation. Noblemen crowded to his studio, and to be painted by Reynolds was the thing. We have no list of sitters for 1754, but we know that among them was no less a person than the Home Secretary, Lord Holderness, on the treatment of whose rubicund face the painter expended a vast amount of time and thought. Mason, to whom we owe the knowledge of many interesting facts in Reynolds' career, was a personal friend of the Secretary, and having been permitted to attend every sitting, has left us a most interesting and valuable account of the painter's method of operation "at this early time." The description is worth quoting. "On his light-coloured canvas," we are told, "he had already laid a ground of white, where he meant to place the head, and which was still wet. He had nothing upon his palette but flake-white, lake, and black; and, without making any previous sketch or outline, he began with much celerity to scumble these pigments together, till he had produced in less than an hour a likeness sufficiently intelligible, yet withal, as might be expected, cold and pallid to

the last degree. At the second sitting, he added, I believe, to the three other colours, a little Naples yellow; but I do not remember that he used any vermilion, neither then, nor at the third trial; but it is to be noted that his Lordship had a countenance much heightened by scorbutic eruption. Lake alone might produce the carnation required. However this be, the portrait turned out a striking likeness, and the attitude, so far as a three-quarters canvas would admit, perfectly natural and peculiar to his person, which at all times bespoke a fashioned gentleman. His drapery was crimson velvet, copied from a coat he then wore, and apparently not only painted, but glazed with lake, which has stood to this hour perfectly well; though the face, which, as well as the whole picture, was highly varnished before he sent it home, very soon faded, and soon after the forehead particularly cracked, almost to peeling off, which it would have done long since had not his pupil Doughty repaired it." That too many of Reynolds' pictures have cracked, and either peeled off, or, what is worse, been spoilt in the repairing, is unfortunately only too true; and that the painter himself was conscious of this defect is proved by the experiments he tried for the purpose of ensuring durability—but all in vain, and at last he is driven back to assert that all good pictures cracked.

Reynolds had not been in London a year before he made the acquaintance of one who was destined to be his most intimate friend, and in whose "Life" he too lives. The story has often been told how at the house of some fair neighbours Reynolds first met Johnson, how the painter's jesting cynicism on the "comfort of being relieved from a burthen of gratitude," while it shocked the ladies, struck the Doctor as displaying observation and originality, and how Johnson walked home with Reynolds and supped with him that night.

Two men apparently more unlike than Reynolds and Johnson it would be hard to find. The gentle manner, bland accents, and imperturbable good humour of the one, contrast

with the rough assertiveness, brusque speech and irascible temper of the other. Yet they had much in common: if Johnson had no taste for art, Reynolds was by no means devoid of literary power; both were sociably inclined, and both were earnest in their honest detestation of shams. With Edmund Burke they form a trio such as it would be impossible to match in any other age. Her three sons—the orator, the man of letters, and the painter—are enough by themselves to justify the last century from the calumnies which have been levelled against her.

In 1755 Reynolds had no less than 120 sitters, and could number amongst them, heroes in Lord Anson and Colonel Haldane, statesmen in Pulteney (now Lord Bath), Hillsborough and Townshend, demagogues in Alderman Beckford and Dr. Lucas, beauties in Mrs. Bastard and Lady Kildare, besides a host of others celebrated in the world of their time, but now, alas! consigned to oblivion, or only noticeable for having been painted by Reynolds.

There was hardly one of these who did not find his professional connection with the painter rapidly lead to friendship, and by the end of this year Reynolds was as well known as any man in town. The "*beau monde*" (as the phrase then went), the artists' clubs, the literary coteries, all welcomed as an acquisition this genial and accomplished man. His friendship with Johnson was becoming greater daily, he was intimate with Garrick and Hogarth, and there was not a wit or a dilettante with whom he had not some acquaintance. Success encouraged, and did not spoil Reynolds. He was just one of those men whom fortune destines for an easy life; difficulties and disappointments would not indeed have soured that sweet temper, or ruffled that placid constitution, but they would, as far as we can judge, have made him careless and idle, and often prevented him from doing his best. But the success which had come so quickly, the praise which was so lavishly bestowed upon him, instead of enervating, only stirred him to fresh

exertions, made him determined to outdo himself, to make each portrait better than the last. Probably no painter ever worked harder or more conscientiously. There is no scamping, no haste observable in any one of Reynolds' productions; and of what other artist can that be said? The most commonplace, the most uninteresting sitter is carefully studied, and the magic of the great painter's brush produces what is at once a genuine likeness and a charming picture.

We have no list of sitters for 1756, and all we know for certain of his work that year is that he painted a half-length portrait of his friend Johnson,—a labour of love this must assuredly have been, for the Doctor's pecuniary circumstances were not such as to enable him to indulge in the luxury of a ten-guinea picture. This is not, of course, the well-known portrait of the sage in which he is represented as peering into a book which he holds close in front of his eyes. That was painted twenty-two years later, when Johnson's sight was almost gone. The present one has been engraved for Boswell's "Life," and gives us a truer and a better idea of the great man than do any of the others.

It was in the June of this year that an untoward event occurred, which sent a thrill of horror and rage through England, and which must have affected Reynolds in no small degree. Minorca was lost. The stronghold which had been won so bravely, and which seemed to promise England the command of the Mediterranean, was no longer hers. Even the painter's placid temperament must have been stirred to emotion when he heard of his former host Blakeney manfully holding out with his little garrison against fearful odds, and looking anxiously for the promised succour, which never came.

This was indeed an *annus mirabilis:* disaster followed disaster, till England seemed to have become the Job of nations. The Convention of Kloster-seven, the failure of Hawke's expedition, the losses in America, combined with a general scarcity of provisions, make this year only too memorable in our annals. But

it was not long before our losses were retrieved and fresh glories gained. The year 1759 is the one of which Horace Walpole speaks so gaily. "It is necessary," he laughingly writes, "to ask every morning what new victory there is, for fear of missing one." The conquest of Canada far outweighed the loss of Minorca, victories such as Minden wiped out the disgraceful Convention of 1756, and Hawke's fame was established by the glorious victory of Quiberon.

But this is to anticipate and digress; we must go back to 1757 and to Reynolds. This was a very busy year with him. In reading the entries in the pocket-book one wonders how it was possible that one man could get through so much work, and not degenerate into a machine. But far from any deterioration, there is a steady improvement visible in his portraits this year, though it is not signalised by the production of any one great picture. As a proof of Reynolds' power of work—or rather as an illustration, for no proof is necessary—a list of his sitters for the month of March 1757 is subjoined, with the number of sittings allotted to each :—

Mrs. West (2); Col. Griffin; Mr. Darby (5); Col. Vernon (3); Mrs. Morris (3); Miss Pelham (6); Mrs. Watson (5); Lord R. Bertie (9); Duke and Duchess of Ancaster (9); Mrs. Charlton; Mr. and Mrs. Jubb (10); Mr. Hayward; Lord Guildford (4); Lady C. Fox (6); Capt. Tryal (3); Lord Middleton (4); Mrs. Lethulier (4); Mrs. Douglas; Lord Abergavenny (2); Mr. Lloyd (8); Mrs. Lloyd (8); Sir J. Ligonier; Col. Trapaud; Sir H. Grey (2); Mrs. Phillips (4); Lord Pembroke (3). In all, 28 sitters, and 106 sittings! And Northcote tells us that the next year was even busier than 1757. No less than 150 persons sat to Reynolds in the course of 1758, among whom were the Duke of Cumberland, Prince Edward, Lady Mary Coke, Lady Caroline Fox. No better proof can be given of Reynolds' kindly heart, than that in this busiest of busy years he should have time to paint a son of his old friend Dr. Mudge of Plymouth, and send the portrait as a gift to

the father, whom illness had prevented from seeing his son in the flesh that year.

The year 1759 is signalised by a further extension of Court favour. Perhaps it was because the King had a supreme contempt for "Bainting and Boetry," that the rival court of the Princess Dowager affected a certain love for the arts; at all events, the young Prince of Wales sits to Reynolds early in this year, and the leading members of the Prince's party ostentatiously announce that letters and arts are to be patronised by royalty in the new reign, which assuredly cannot be far off. But far more interest attaches to the portraits of two persons very different from the modest young Prince. It is a fortunate circumstance that Garrick's vanity took the form of a desire to perpetuate his face and figure. Portraits of the great actor exist in profusion; every painter had had him as a sitter frequently. Reynolds painted him no less than seven times, and he sat to Gainsborough, Angelica Kauffmann, and Zoffany, as well as to a host of minor artists. It is fortunate that we possess so many representations of Garrick, for surely otherwise he would have long before this become a name and nothing more. The actor alone of all artists produces nothing "fixed and embodied in material objects," his fame rests solely on report; we who live after his day have the scantiest means of determining whether his contemporaries were right in their criticism and their praise. The actor alone has no appeal to posterity; if he is unsuccessful in pleasing the taste of his age, his name is "writ in water." Perhaps Garrick felt something of this, and decided to call in the painter's art to ensure his being remembered by future generations. The greatest of all the portraits of Garrick is unquestionably the one Reynolds painted in 1761, in which the actor is represented between Tragedy and Comedy, as if reluctant to choose either as his only goddess. His looks and attitude tell as plainly as words could the history of Garrick's career. It was Tragedy who had been his earliest love, and even now that the allurements

of Comedy have bewitched him, he cannot altogether desert her to whom he owed his first success. All this and much more is expressed in this picture, which is to my mind one of the finest of Reynolds' allegoric portraits.

The other noteworthy portrait of this year is one of Kitty Fisher, the Phryne of the day, whose wit and adventures formed a favourite topic of conversation at this time. She was painted by Reynolds no less than five times: once, most appropriately, as Cleopatra; but in this year's picture she is reclining on a sofa with a dove on her lap, while hard by another dove is in the act of fluttering down to join its mate. The portrait is not altogether satisfactory; there is rather too much "pose" about this figure, and more studied ease than we should have expected from a lady whose vivacity was her most renowned quality. The air of innocence is evidently put on, and in the whole conception there is something so incongruous that we can hardly acquit the artist of a certain amount of irony. Still, take the picture as it is, forget who and what Kitty Fisher was, and who can fail to be charmed? To 1759 also belongs the "Venus," one of the few pictures painted during this period which are not portraits. Suggested by the famous Venus of Titian, it in some degree resembles that magnificent picture. The colouring is extremely beautiful, and the whole pose of the goddess has a delicious languor, as if she were resting from the noontide heat, while just above her Cupid is gazing with boyish admiration on the lovely figure. The landscape in which the goddess is set shows that the painter's study of the scenery of his native county had not been thrown away on him. To Mason we owe an interesting description of the curious way by which the perfect flesh-tints were obtained. After mentioning his first visit to Reynolds, while the "Venus" was on the easel, which chanced to be just when the head was being painted from the model of a beautiful girl of sixteen, "A second casual visit," he adds, "presented me with a very different object: he was then painting the body, and in his

P. 22

MISS KITTY FISHER

sitting-chair a very squalid beggar-woman was placed, with a child, not above a year old, quite naked upon her lap. As may be imagined, I could not help testifying my surprise at seeing him paint the carnation of the Goddess of Beauty from that of a little child which seemed to have been nourished rather with gin than milk, and saying that 'I wondered he had not taken some more healthy model;' but he answered, with his usual *naïveté*, that 'whatever I might think, the child's flesh assisted him in giving a certain *morbidezza* to his own colouring, which he thought he should hardly arrive at had he not such an object, when it was extreme, as it certainly was, before his eyes.'"

Next year is memorable alike in the history of our country and in the life of the painter. Seventeen hundred and sixty is the beginning of a new era. George II. is dead, and his place is taken by a young king who is more of an Englishman than any monarch since Elizabeth, who is determined to break free from the bonds of the Whig oligarchy, and be a king in something more than name. The Court is thronged with Tories, who for well-nigh fifty years had been proscribed, but who were now willing to forget that the king who gloried in the name of Briton was one of the hated Hanoverian race. But in Reynolds' life, this year is noticeable for his removal from Newport Street to Leicester Square, and his setting up a "chariot." This vehicle, according to Northcote, was decorated in the most elaborate fashion, and was soon well-known all over the town. Not that Reynolds himself had much time for carriage-exercise, or perhaps much inclination for it. But Miss Fanny no doubt enjoyed it, and it was an outward visible sign of the painter's prosperity; for surely if to keep a gig be sign of respectability, to have such a chariot as this must be significant of affluence. Another event in Reynolds' history is that in 1760 for the first time he sends some of his pictures to an exhibition. The Society of Arts opened an exhibition of paintings in April 1760, and to this Reynolds sent four portraits. The experiment succeeded, and after this date annual exhibitions of pictures by

living artists are continuous. Reynolds was not slow to perceive the advantages of this system, both to himself and to Art generally. By collecting together the productions of various artists, connoisseurs were better able to judge of the peculiar merits of each; and Reynolds, who had nothing to fear from comparison with any living rival, would thereby increase his reputation and his income.

Among the portraits that belong to this year are those of Dodsley, the famous publisher, Colman the elder, the Marquis of Granby, Lord Gower, Sir Richard Grosvenor, Admiral Boscawen, and Lady Waldegrave. But perhaps the most striking portrait is one of Nelly O'Brien, a young lady of the Kitty Fisher school, whom Reynolds painted again in 1763. Altogether 1760 brought the painter 120 sitters, though two years before this he had raised his prices, and now charged twenty-five guineas for a head, fifty for a half-length, and one hundred for a whole-length. Clearly his income must have been more than sufficient to have justified the chariot, and the removal to Leicester Square.

The 1761 exhibition was as great a success as the first one. Hogarth contributed no less than seven pictures, among them being "The Gate of Calais" and "The Lady's Last Stake," while Reynolds sent five, including the portraits of Lord Ligonier and of Sterne. The former is represented as a somewhat conventional hero, and the picture attracts us perhaps less than any of the great painter's. But the portrait of Sterne is a masterpiece; we seem to see, in gazing on this picture, what the man really was. The whole attitude, every line of the face, even the set of the wig, all show that Reynolds had fathomed that strange character, had distinguished the sentimentalism of Sterne from true sentiment, had seen the hideous sham, and done his utmost to unmask the living lie. But, cowardly hypocrite though he was, who dares deny rare genius to the author of "Tristram Shandy," and, what is far more uncommon, that perfect humour which against our will makes us almost love the man? There

is no trace of nobility in the face, but there is a something which marks it as belonging to one possessed, whether for good or ill, of talent unequalled. Sterne tells us that the painter refused to be paid for the picture, but desired his acceptance of it as a tribute to his genius. The story may be true, but coming from the source it does, it is at least not above suspicion; and Reynolds, generous as he was to his friends, was not in the habit of paying such substantial tributes to genius, nor would the intimate of Johnson have been altogether dazzled by Sterne.

Besides this great picture, we have in this year portraits of Admiral Rodney, Lord Waldegrave, the Duchess of Beaufort, Miss Cholmondeley, Lord Bath, and innumerable other persons. To the next year's exhibition he sent only three pictures, but all of them important ones:—Garrick between Tragedy and Comedy; Lady Elizabeth Keppel adorning a statue of Hymen with flowers; and Lady Waldegrave clasping her child to her breast. Of the first of these we have already spoken. That of Lady Keppel is emphatically bridal: the dazzling white of her dress, and the statue she is decorating, all point to the fact that she was one of the young queen's bridesmaids. It is one of those charming pictures of the beauties of the day, in which the introduction of a piece of antique statuary lends a wonderful dignity and classical grace to the portrait. The fastidious taste of the realistic school—the pedants of art—may be shocked at the incongruity, but the general verdict that they rank amongst the loveliest works of art ever produced in England will not be much affected thereby. In the other picture we see the marvellous way in which the painter could depict children. The half-shy, half-sly expression, the nestling attitude, the look of apprehension more assumed than real, are all thoroughly characteristic. The mother indeed is beautiful, but our eyes are for the child.

Amongst other portraits for 1762 may be mentioned those of Fox, the Duke of Bedford, Lady Guildford, and the Princess Amelia. But the number of sitters is not quite so great as in

some other years, for the painter found it necessary to take a six weeks' holiday, and surely never was holiday better earned or more enjoyed. With Johnson as his companion he revisited his old Devonshire haunts and his old Devonshire friends. For Reynolds was loyal to his native county if ever man was, and the west country was proud of him. News of his great success had reached Devonshire, and the squire who went up to London made it his first business to arrange for a portrait by Reynolds. In the pocket-books occur over and over again good old western names; Buller and Edgcumb, Bastard and Parker, all are to be found in the lists of sitters.

Reynolds and Johnson shared the honours of the west between them: from Salisbury to Plymouth their journey was a royal progress. There was nothing to mar the holiday, never was the Doctor in better spirits or more ready to throw off his assertiveness.

At Plymouth they stayed with Reynolds' most intimate friend Dr. Mudge, a man, as Boswell tells us, "not more distinguished for quickness of parts than loved and esteemed for his amiable manners," and here it was they met Zachariah Mudge, a man of most uneuphonious name, but who is worthy of remembrance if he but partly deserved Reynolds' eulogium, that he was "the wisest man he ever met with," or Johnson's magnificent "character," in which he is depicted as a model of the clerical life of the time. This excellent man was painted by Reynolds four years later.

We have no list of sitters for 1763, but we know that to this year's exhibition Reynolds sent four portraits, one of which represented Nelly O'Brien, and another the Earl of Rothes, besides which we have a portrait of the new prime minister, Lord Bute, and one of Jenkinson, afterwards to be known as the leader of the "king's friends," which can be for certain attributed to this year. Again the painter raises his charges. He will not henceforth paint a whole-length portrait for less than one hundred guineas, while even for a "head," 2 ft. by 1 ft.

6 in., he is able to ask thirty guineas. Yet, despite these increased prices, there is no falling off in the number of sitters; the pocket-book for 1764 is as full as ever, and includes almost more illustrious names than any other. Shelburne, Pratt, Granby, the Archbishops of York and Canterbury, the Duchess of Hamilton, Mrs. Abington, Miss Draycote, Miss Horneck, the Duchess of Grafton, the Count of Lippe-Buckebourg, all sat to Reynolds this year. In the exhibition there are only two pictures by him, portraits of Lady Waldegrave and Lady Sarah Bunbury: the former no longer the happy mother, but a disconsolate widow, her husband having but recently died; the latter, the fairest of the fair, now in the second stage of her strange, eventful history. As Lady Sarah Lenox she had made such an impression on the young king that, but for the opposition of ministers, she would have ranked amongst our queens; as Lady Sarah Bunbury she was the wife of a worthless man, from whom she obtained a divorce; and lastly, married to General Napier, she became the mother of two of England's heroes.

But 1764 is more important, or at least more interesting, in Reynolds' life, from having seen the foundation of The Club; and this forms a convenient halting-point, where we can stop for a moment to gather some idea of the men who called the painter friend.

CHAPTER III.

(A.D. 1764.)

REYNOLDS AND HIS FRIENDS.

THE great painter's kindliness and sociability were famous even in his own days, when the social virtues were more cultivated than they are now. The unruffled temper, the gentle sympathy of Reynolds, tended to make him a man of many friends, while his literary and conversational powers were such that he had no need to fear a Johnson or a Burke. Devoted as he was to his art, he was something more than a painter, and it was not for his pictures but for himself that he was valued. Of his introduction to Johnson I have spoken above, and the acquaintance thus begun quickly ripened into a friendship which only ceased with the great scholar's death. To "The Idler" Reynolds contributed three papers, of which hereafter. Johnson, as we have seen, was Reynolds' companion in the trip to Devonshire; Reynolds it was who founded The Club, of which Johnson became the Dictator; Reynolds who supported the great man in his feebler years with sympathy and kindly aid, who was present at his dying bed, and to whom Boswell dedicated his magnificent tribute to his departed friend.

For Reynolds Johnson entertained the highest admiration and respect; he was, as he told Boswell, "the most invulnerable man he knew—whom, if he should quarrel with him, he should find the most difficulty to abuse,"—and the painter is the

one man in The Club whom the great Chairman never assaults. Once and once only does the veracious Boswell record anything approaching a quarrel between them, and then a soft but dignified rebuke from Reynolds is sufficient to at once bring out Johnson's better feelings, and reconciliation follows before the quarrel has more than begun.

The story is hackneyed, but I cannot resist quoting it here, illustrating as it does so admirably the characters of the two great men. Before 1766 Johnson had enjoyed his glass as much as any member of The Club; but a severe illness in that year compelled him to give up the use of alcohol, and with characteristic unreason he wished to force water-drinking on all his friends. Never did he tire of inveighing against wine, and any one who ventured to argue the point with him got a severe rebuff. Witness the poor man who innocently suggested that at all events drinking made one forget disagreeable things. "Would you not," he mildly inquired, "allow a man to drink for that reason?" "Yes, sir," grunted Johnson, "if he sat next *you*." To such an inveterate hater of wine, even Reynolds moderation was excess; and on one occasion, when the painter had urged that "to please one's company was a strong motive," Johnson, having no answer ready, retorted rudely with "I won't argue any more with you, sir—you are too far gone." Reynolds' rebuke is calmly dignified: "I should have thought so indeed, sir, had I made such a speech as you have now done." This was enough. Johnson, "drawing himself in, and I really thought blushing," says Boswell, "replies, 'Nay, don't be angry—I did not mean to offend you.'" Yet, good friends as they were, and impatient of any difference of opinion as Johnson was, there were many points on which they held opposite views, nor did Reynolds join in that absurd worship of Johnson which gave oracular value to his every utterance and invested all his opinions with infallibility. He was too clear-headed not to perceive that Johnson's weakness lay in exaggeration and arbitrariness, and though he did not make it his business to argue every point

with the sage, no doubt when Johnson became more than usually dictatorial, the painter "shifted his trumpet," and confined his attention to his snuffbox.

The Club, which owed its origin to Reynolds, used to meet at the Turk's Head, Gerrard Street, Soho, once a week, and originally consisted of but nine members, all of them men well known in the literary world, and most of whom have left a reputation behind them. Chief among these are two whose names must live as long as England has a literature and a history, for they are Oliver Goldsmith and Edmund Burke.

In 1764 neither of them had achieved fame. Goldsmith was known better perhaps as a literary hack than as the author of "The Citizen of the World," the only important work he had as yet produced; but this year was to see the publication of "The Traveller," a poem which Johnson unhesitatingly pronounced to be the finest since Pope's time, and the manuscript of "The Vicar of Wakefield" had already been sold. Gentle as Reynolds himself, simple-minded, careless, extravagant, possessed of a charming pen but a faltering tongue, the sport of fortune, to whose vagaries he patiently resigned himself, childishly vain and easily gratified, this curious medley of characteristics results in a character altogether lovable. And remembering what he has left us, no one will demur to Johnson's dictum, that despite this blemish and that foible, he was a very great man. Ten years only was he a member of The Club, for in the spring of 1774, then only forty-six years old, he breathed his last. Reynolds' inimitable art has prevented the features of Goldsmith from ever being forgotten. Who does not know the famous portrait, which so truly tells the life-history of the man? It is the man himself who is there, as true, as modest, as pure, as Sterne was artificial, vain and base. The nobility of the face, which shows signs of suffering and patient endurance, as well as of tenderness and humour, is the one thing that strikes us. "He was a very great man," and what Johnson said Reynolds painted.

P. 30

THE INFANT SAMUEL JOHNSON.

But whatever debt Goldsmith owed Reynolds for this admirable portrait was amply repaid. In his unfinished poem "Retaliation," Goldsmith in a series of epitaphs lightly sketches his friends' characters; praise is of course lavished on all, but the highest encomiums are reserved for Reynolds:—

> "Here Reynolds is laid, and, to tell you my mind,
> He has not left a wiser or better behind,
> His pencil was striking, resistless, and grand;
> His manners were gentle, complying, and bland,
> Still born to improve us in every part,
> His pencil our faces, his manners our heart;
> To coxcombs averse, yet most civilly steering,
> When they judged without skill, he was still hard of hearing,
> When they talked of their Raphaels, Correggios, and stuff,
> He shifted his trumpet, and only took snuff."

Strange irony of fate, that the writer of the epitaphs should be the first to be taken away!

Burke was also painted by Reynolds, but the portrait is commonplace, and does injustice to the great orator. Not that Reynolds failed to perceive, even in 1766, when the picture was painted, the grandeur of his friend's intellect, but somehow it is not expressed, and the author did far more justice to the painter when, after his death, he wrote his character. That Reynolds eagerly watched Burke's rising fame, that he rejoiced in his successes and sympathised in the neglect he met with only too often, is certain, but I fail to see that there is any ground for believing that Reynolds was an ardent whig. Political passions were left outside The Club; and Johnson, who asserted and believed that "the devil was the first whig," could none the less remain Burke's friend and admirer to the end of his days. And if this be true of such an ardent politician, how much more so is it of the painter, of whom Northcote tells us "that politics never employed his thoughts for a moment"! Party-spirit, it is true, ran high at this time, but it did not prevent social intercourse between

men of the most opposite political sentiments. England was not split into two camps, nor was the question, "Under which king, Bezonian? Speak or die," put in the eighteenth century more often than it is now.

Burke remained Reynolds' friend to the end of his days, and in his will Sir Joshua, besides appointing him one of his executors, left him a legacy of two thousand pounds, and forgave him a debt of an equal amount.

Besides these illustrious members, The Club as originally constituted included Langton and Beauclerk, men of fashion, but something more than wits and dilettanti, or they would not have gained the friendship of Johnson; Dr. Nugent, whose chief claim to fame is that of having been Burke's father-in-law; Chamier, whose reputation was considerable in his lifetime, and who rose to be an under-secretary of state, but is now only known to students of Boswell. Last, and deservedly last, comes Sir John Hawkins, that most "unclubable" of men, whose enforced resignation became ere long very necessary, if harmony was to be maintained. The Club prospered, and in 1792, the year of Reynolds' death, contained thirty-five members, amongst whom we find Fox and Windham, Boswell and Sheridan, Bishop Percy and Dr. Burney, Malone and Steevens; but of the original nine Burke and Langton alone are left.

Merely to enumerate all the painter's friends would occupy pages; for, as Malone says, "For above thirty years there was scarce a person in the three kingdoms distinguished in literature, art, law, politics, or war, who did not occasionally appear at his table." Sir Joshua's dinners were famous. Twice as many people were asked as could sit round the table, and dinner began at five o'clock whether the guests had arrived or not. As fresh persons came in, the original diners were more and more crowded, and "as for waiting," we are told "it was every man for himself." But if material pleasures were not very great, "the feast of reason and the flow of soul" made up for all personal discomfort, and an invitation to dine with

Reynolds was not likely to be refused by any one who had once been present at these convivial repasts.

But amongst all the talent and fashion of the metropolis, Reynolds never forgot his old Devonshire friends. A west-country face was always welcome in Leicester Square, and a Devonshire name sufficient to ensure a hearty reception, and, if need were, sympathy and assistance. On his portrait of Dr. Mudge, Reynolds lavished more pains than on any other, and it takes a very high place among the painter's masterpieces. Northcote was recommended to Reynolds as being a Plymouth boy, and was received by him as a pupil on the most generous terms. To be chosen alderman of his native place was considered by Reynolds one of the highest honours man could aspire to, and when the President of the Royal Academy was raised to the dignity of Mayor of Plympton Earl, then indeed fortune could do no more for him. This feeling of Reynolds has been wondered at and ridiculed, but it is not inexplicable. Every man likes to be a prophet in his own country, every one remembers certain persons (generally officials) whom he regarded with reverence and awe. To the schoolmaster's son no doubt the aldermanship was "a thing of beauty," while the mayoralty was "a joy for ever," and long years of absence had not altogether destroyed this feeling. This gratitude for being chosen to these high offices was so great, that he presented the corporation of Plympton with a portrait of himself, with a request that it might be hung in a good light. In thanking him for the present, the worthy aldermen informed him that it had been "hung between two old pictures, which acted as a foil and set it off to advantage." These "two old pictures" he had himself painted!

Alas! Plympton corporation is no more; the ruthless hand of the municipal reformer has been heavy on it, and the office of which Reynolds was so proud is now as obsolete as that of Bretwalda.

CHAPTER IV.

(A.D. 1765 TO A.D. 1775.)

PORTRAITS: THE ROYAL ACADEMY FOUNDED.

WE return to our chronological sketch, and in 1765 we find that Reynolds sends to the exhibition only two pictures. One of these is again a portrait of Lady Sarah Bunbury, who is now represented as sacrificing to the Graces. The other portrait has no name attached to it. This was a comparatively idle year, the list of sitters is small, and if we except the picture of Lady Sarah, there is nothing worthy of a high rank. It is different in 1766, when we have a much larger number of sitters, amongst whom for the first time we notice the Princess Caroline, Lord Rockingham (the Prime Minister), General Conway, the Duke of Portland, and, last but not least, Angelica Kauffmann. The only lady but one who has attained the distinction of an R.A., and interesting to us as the heroine of a charming story, it must be confessed that her performances as an artist are of no very high calibre. The fact that she and Reynolds painted each other's portraits was sufficient for the gossips to couple their names together, but it would seem that the encouragement the great painter gave her arose rather from his usual kindliness than from any deeper feeling.

To this year's exhibition Reynolds contributes four pictures: two fine heroic portraits of the Marquis of Granby and

General Amherst, a group representing Mr. Paine, a well-known architect of the day, and his son, and a semi-allegorical representation of Mrs. Hill as Euphrosyne. Nothing of Reynolds' appears in the 1767 exhibition, for reasons which I shall advert to hereafter, but this year gives us the grand portrait of Dr. Mudge, as well as a carefully painted picture of the Speaker (Sir J. Cust), to whose peruke alone a sitting is given. There is the ordinary number of sitters, including representatives of every class, from the Lord Chancellor and the Duchess of Marlborough to Johnson's black servant and Nelly O'Brien.

In 1768 Reynolds snatches another six weeks' holiday, which he spends in France, in company with Richard Burke. A trip to the Continent was by no means so simple an affair a hundred years ago as it is now. In the diary we find that the first day's journey only brought the travellers as far as Canterbury, and it is eight days before we have the entry "Lay at Paris." The stay in France was spent partly in holiday-making, partly in visiting picture galleries—for which Paris was justly famous. Owing to this holiday and other circumstances, the list of sitters is very small, and perhaps his friend and fellow-countryman, Dunning, then Solicitor-general, subsequently Lord Ashburton, is the only one of the painter's sitters who needs especial remark.

But meagre as this year is, both in the number and importance of Reynolds' pictures, it stands out as illustrious alike in the painter's biography and in the annals of English art, for it was in 1768 that the Royal Academy was founded. Academies for instruction in art were to be met with at this time in all the more important cities of Italy, and the idea of establishing an art school in England was an old one. Almost fifty years before this, Sir James Thornhill had elaborated and laid before the government of his day a scheme for a Royal Academy, but the two first Georges were little likely to do anything to encourage art, and Walpole's contempt for all "unpractical" pursuits is proverbial. Clearly, art must wait for a great change

of feeling before she could hope for more than toleration from royalty. It is true that George III. cannot lay claim to any knowledge of painting, and criticised pictures rather for the subjects they represented, than the style in which they were executed; still he did not profess that absolute carelessness for art that his predecessors had done. He was not unwilling to pose as the patron of the arts, or to associate his name with the establishment of an English School of Painting, nor would his ministers be likely to dissuade him from a course which might possibly lend a sort of reflected lustre to their names. So one great difficulty was got over; and in another most important respect there had been a change since the days of Thornhill. Imagine an Academy founded in 1723. Why, for thirty years, with the single exception of Hogarth, there would have been no artist to exhibit pictures worth the trouble of looking at! The Academy would have perpetuated the inanities of such men as Hudson, and the office of president would have fallen into as great disrepute as did that of poet laureate under Pye and Eusden. It was certainly a most fortunate circumstance that Thornhill's scheme came to nothing, and the foundation of the Royal Academy was postponed till the year of grace 1768.

Mr. Taylor gives us a most valuable account of the successive steps which led to the foundation of the Royal Academy, which he has compiled with great care from various contemporary authorities. From this it appears that the first attempt to establish an Academy was in 1711, when Sir Godfrey Kneller and other artists formed a school for instruction in drawing; and that Thornhill, after the failure of his great project, established an academy at his own house, which he kept up till his death in 1734. This was succeeded by a life-school held in Greyhound Court, Arundel Street, under Mr. Moser, which was joined in 1739 by Hogarth and others, and migrated to Peter's Court, St. Martin's Lane, whence, in 1757, it removed to Pall Mall. Meanwhile schemes had been again proposed for establishing a national academy under royal patronage, but

THE SNAKE IN THE GRASS (*in the National Gallery*). p. 36.

nothing had resulted from them, and the idea was dropped. As we have already seen, the first exhibition of pictures was held in 1760, in the great room of the Society of Arts, and this was so great a success that in the next year the Society of Artists held a second in their own rooms in Spring Gardens. After this the exhibitions are annual, and in 1765 the Society obtains a Royal Charter of Incorporation, and is known as "The Society of Artists." The constitution provided that there should be twenty-four directors chosen annually, who were to elect the fellows. Among the original list of directors we find the names of Wilson, Hayman, Sandby and Moser, Paine and Chambers, the architects, Wilton, the sculptor, and the engraver, McArdell. Thus it might have seemed that at last an Academy had been established on a satisfactory basis. But it was not so. A Society of Artists which did not include Reynolds could hardly be considered in a good way, and the whole organisation of the Society very quickly got out of gear. The charter had given unlimited power to the members, and apparently they spent most of their time in abusing the directors. This state of things got to such a pitch that in 1768 the members refused to re-elect sixteen of the directors, and the remainder resigned their thankless offices very soon after. Thus the management of the Society was left to men possessed of neither experience, reputation, nor talent. But the ex-directors had no intention of leaving matters in this unsatisfactory condition. Headed by Chambers and Moser, they determined to found a rival Society, if possible more directly under the patronage of the Sovereign than the former one, and in which the evils which had proved so fatal before should be effectually prevented. The upshot of their deliberations was that a memorial was presented to the King, in which the establishment of a Royal Academy was sought, and a constitution drawn up in outline. The King seemed very favourably disposed, and no doubt was somewhat ashamed of his connection with the Society of Artists. Early in December the scheme had been

elaborated and approved by the King, to whom a list of officers was to be submitted. It was the universal feeling of the artists that nothing could be done without Reynolds, and a deputation consisting of Moser and Penny called upon him to request his attendance at a meeting which was to be held at Wilton's on December 9th, for the purpose of finally deciding on the officers of the Academy. But Reynolds was cautious of committing himself. Kirby, the new president of the Society of Artists, had informed him positively that the King would have nothing to do with the rival project. West was sent off post-haste, and it needed all his persuasion before Reynolds could be induced to attend the meeting. Meanwhile, the artists who were assembled at Wilton's house knew how much the success of their scheme must depend on the great portrait-painter's co-operation, and there were grave fears that he might continue obdurate. The return of West bringing Reynolds with him was received with delight, and by acclamation it was decided that the first president of the Royal Academy should be Joshua Reynolds. The King at once gave his consent, and the Academy comes into being on December 18th, 1768.

The list of the original Academicians includes the names of Reynolds, Chambers, Moser, Hayman, and Newton, respectively president, treasurer, keeper, librarian, and secretary; Penny, professor of painting, Thomas Sandby, professor of architecture, Wall, professor of perspective, and Hunter, professor of anatomy; the professoriate being increased soon afterwards by the addition of Johnson as professor of ancient literature, and Goldsmith as professor of ancient history, while Delton, the original treasurer of the Incorporated Society, was appointed antiquary. Besides these officers we have Bartolozzi, Cipriani, Cosway, West, Wilson, Zoffany, Nollekens, and Wilton, together with two ladies—Angelica Kauffmann and Mary Moser. Other names, which it is not worth while to enumerate, made up the number to thirty-nine.

In this list two names are wanting which we certainly should

have expected to find there—those of Romney and Gainsborough. It is needless to say that in the omission of these two artists the President's maligners see proof of his jealous disposition. Reynolds, they say, would brook no rival. The accusation is gratuitously false, and can be easily disproved. With regard to Romney, it must be remembered that although he had already won prizes offered by the Society of Arts for the best historical paintings, and had obtained a fair meed of success as a portrait painter, he was in 1768 still a young man, and it might well be thought could afford to wait. Gainsborough should certainly have been included in the first list, but the omission of his name must have been a pure oversight, as in the official catalogue of the first exhibition the initials R.A. are appended to his name. That Romney felt slighted by his name not appearing on the first list is probable, from the fact that he never sent any pictures to the Academy exhibitions, and never sought admission into that body. Canvassing would have been necessary, and to this the shy, proud artist would not stoop. But Gainsborough, though he took little or no interest in the Academy, contributed to the exhibitions with regularity.

The establishment of the Royal Academy has without doubt been extremely beneficial to English art. Its judgment is not infallible: it may have occasionally failed to recognise genius, it may have sometimes given its sanction to mediocrity, its elections may have been influenced by other motives than the interests of art; but with all its failings and shortcomings, it is an institution we are proud of, whose judgment we respect, and which has numbered amongst its members all the greatest names in the history of modern English art.

Early in 1769, the king still further expressed his interest in the new Academy by conferring the honour of knighthood upon its President. As his friend Burke declared, "There is a natural fitness in his name for the title;" and it is as "Sir Joshua" that Reynolds is best known. He was not a man to despise such an honour, though, like the mayoralty of Plympton,

he may have shared it with those who were quite unworthy of any distinction. Like the chariot, it had its value: it showed the public that he was a successful man.

The Academy dinners, so famous in the history of banquets, were instituted by Reynolds, who also imposed upon himself the task of delivering a presidential address every year. Of these discourses I shall speak hereafter. It is only necessary to remark at present, that the imputation that the President got Johnson or Burke to write them for him is absolutely without foundation. Dr. Johnson's indignant disclaimer is surely sufficient to set the matter at rest: "Sir Joshua Reynolds, sir, would as soon get me to paint for him as to write for him."

The first exhibition of the Royal Academy was held in the Society's rooms in Pall Mall, and completely eclipsed all former exhibitions, both in the number and excellence of the pictures.

Reynolds sent four, all of them worthy of high place amongst his portraits. The portrait of Miss Morris as Hope nursing Love is particularly exquisite. "Its success," says Mr. Wedmore, "is in a treatment felt, as one looks at the picture, to be so wholly ideal and refined. Nor in its own slight way, even, is the damsel's face—Hope's face,—in this picture devoid of subtlety. There is no touch here of a mother's abandonment, of a mother's joy. Against the child's eagerness stands in contrast the hesitation, the uncertainty, the timidity almost, of the girl." The execution of the picture is perfect: the graceful attitude and the flowing robe give it a beauty of its own; while the sad fate of the lady, who died of consumption while her picture was being exhibited, lends it a tragic interest beyond that of any other portrait. The other pictures of this year are representations of the Duchess of Manchester as Diana, Mrs. Blake as Juno, and portraits of Mrs. Crewe and Mrs. Bouverie. In regarding the two first of these pictures we must remember that classicism was the taste of the age. The mythological legends of Greece and Rome appealed to the eighteenth century far more than they do to the present age. It was as natural

UGOLINO (*in the possession of Lord Buckhurst*). p. 42.

then to depict a lady as Venus or Juno, as it was to represent a member of parliament as a Roman senator or a general, or as a Greek hero. Modern dress did not seem to lend itself to painting or sculpture; and although Reynolds was by no means a slave to classicism, it must be recollected that a portrait painter has to consult the wishes of his sitters as well as his own taste. Let us forget that the Diana is the portrait of a Duchess of Manchester, and that Mrs. Blake sat for the Juno, and surely there can hardly be found two lovelier pictures.

The list of sitters for 1769 is a small one, and the President seems to have found his Academy duties entail a considerable expenditure of time. In October we find only one name recorded, and in the two following months only six. Angelica Kauffmann, Burke, Dr. Hawkesworth, and Colman are among this year's sitters, and we know that Sir Joshua also painted Dr. Johnson and Goldsmith, as well as a portrait of himself, in 1769.

In the 1770 exhibition the portraits of Johnson, Goldsmith, and Colman were exhibited, as well as those of Lord Sidney, Colonel Acland, Mrs. Bouverie, Miss Price, and Lady Cornwallis. Besides these there was a picture of "The Babes in the Wood," who are represented slumbering peacefully in that sleep from which they were never to wake. This picture, Mr. Taylor tells us, "is much faded, but the expression of repose in the principal figure is admirable." Of the portrait of Goldsmith —one of the noblest Reynolds ever painted—I have spoken above. That of Johnson is, if we may judge from engravings, the least satisfactory of any Sir Joshua attempted of his friend. There is a worried, anxious expression on the face, a half suspicious, half nervous look in the blinking eyes, which give it more the appearance of a caricature than an "honest similitude." It contrasts very unfavourably either with the earlier portraits or the later ones, and is unworthy alike of the painter and the subject.

This year the painter takes two holidays. In August he

goes to York, where he spends a few days, probably, as Mr. Taylor suggests, with the poet Mason; and in September he once more revisits the haunts of his boyhood. His "fire-new stamp of honour" does not prevent his being the same genial, pleasant companion he always was. His diary shows how thoroughly he enjoyed himself, how he took his part in field-sports and banqueting with the west country squires, as if such a thing as the Royal Academy were unknown to him. In October he is back again in London, and as usual hard at work. It is true that the number of sitters was comparatively small,—owing, in all probability, to the simple fact that all the chief people in the kingdom had already been painted by Reynolds;—but Sir Joshua is not idle. He has to superintend the Academy schools, and is assiduous as ever in his attendance. He has, moreover, to prepare his discourses, which, from the amount of condensed thought they contain, and the highly-polished style in which they are written, must have occupied no inconsiderable amount of time. And besides all this, he is working at his great picture the "Ugolino," and the king and queen are sitting to him. The latter he had never painted, and the former only as Prince of Wales; and it seems that Reynolds had made it a condition of his acceptance of the presidentship that he should be allowed to paint portraits of George III. and Queen Charlotte.

The "Ugolino" is not finished in time for the 1771 exhibition, but Sir Joshua contributes a portrait of an old man, studied from the model who was sitting for the figure of Ugolino, as well as five others, all extremely charming; particularly the portrait of his niece Theophila Palmer, intent on the greatest of English novels, "Clarissa," which in 1771 had not yet been voted tedious and long-winded, but could entrance a simple girl of fourteen like Miss Offy. Nor must we forget that it was in this year that the lovely portrait of the famous actress Mrs. Abington was exhibited. She is represented as "Miss Prue" in *Love for Love*. The graceful archness and spark-

ling grace which contemporaries ascribed to the great comedian are all here, as well as the sauciness and simulated coyness which belong to the character. Certainly a painter who could exhibit such lovely portraits as these had little to fear from the rivalry even of Gainsborough, much less from West or Barry. This year sees Northcote, the son of a Plymouth watchmaker, whose parentage was alone sufficient to interest Reynolds, received into the President's house, and it is from his famous biography that we learn most of Sir Joshua's home life and mode of work. Northcote's reminiscences are extremely interesting, and the picture he gives of Reynolds is in itself sufficient to contradict the calumnies of Allan Cunningham; of the meanness and jealousy which the author of "The Lives of the Painters" would have us believe were among Reynolds' most notable characteristics, there is no trace to be found in the pages of Northcote. On the contrary, numerous instances are given of the painter's generosity and liberality. That he was proud of the position he had won, and of the honours bestowed upon him, is true; but it was an honest pride, not that despicable sentiment which makes a man look down on his humbler friends, or desire by fair or foul means to "burke" a rival. Reynolds, as could be abundantly proved, was ever ready to assist a rising genius, and could appreciate the merits of those who entered the lists against him. In the whole of the man's character there is no trace of meanness, no suspicion of malignity. The genial manner, the winning smile, the gentle voice of the great painter were only the outward signs of an unruffled temper and a lovable disposition. Northcote is proud to acknowledge the great debt he owed Reynolds, and frequently speaks of the encouragement he received from him. Read for instance the letter which Northcote has preserved for us in facsimile, and no one can accuse Sir Joshua of envy or even of neglect of rising talent, and remember that after all the contumely Barry had heaped upon him, Reynolds treated that most impracticable of men with studied courtesy and consideration.

It has been sometimes urged that Sir Joshua was not a good teacher, and that none of his pupils became celebrated painters. The somewhat coarse proverb about the silk purse and the sow's ear surely applies to art almost more than to anything else; and besides, it has been remarked by those who are well acquainted with the history of painting, that it is extremely rare for the pupil of any great master to rise to any eminence. The reason is not far to seek. The style of the master will be copied, and his mannerisms exaggerated, till what were trifling defects become insufferable blemishes; the *style* may be there, but the master hand which created the style will be wanting. But was Reynolds a good teacher? It would seem not. That he could discourse excellently on art, could lay down rules for his pupils' guidance, and could point out faults and suggest how they might be avoided for the future—all that is true. But he does not appear to have been a good practical teacher. All his pupils could hope for was the advantage of seeing the great painter at work, and of observing his method, of studying his pictures, and submitting their attempts to his criticism. And I think we must allow that Sir Joshua could not or did not give them much more. Not that he wilfully neglected them, but, busy man as he was, he had not that time to give, or that individual attention to bestow, which is necessary if ordinary talent for painting is to be turned into anything noteworthy. With him pupils were never the drudges that other artists too often made them,—they were his friends and companions; and though Reynolds' studio may not have been quite the best place for learning to become a great artist, the President's society alone was sufficient to compensate with Northcote at least for anything he may have lost (though in reality there was nothing for him to lose) in becoming his pupil.

The magnificent pictures which Sir Joshua contributed to the exhibition of 1772 show that his avowed principle of making each successive portrait better than the last was still being acted upon. Most charming of the six pictures of 1772

is the portrait of Mrs. Crewe as St. Geneviève, the sainted shepherdess. Her head rests upon her hand, and she is gazing intently on her book, while the sheep are grouped in various attitudes around her. There is something so exquisite in the pose, and so wonderfully effective in the drapery, that this picture alone is sufficient to contradict Horace Walpole's hasty assertion, that Reynolds seldom succeeded with women. This criticism is so unfair and preposterous that we feel a natural mistrust of all other critical remarks by *the* dilettante of the period.

That the greatest of eighteenth-century connoisseurs could have ventured to make such an astounding assertion, coupled as it is with lavish praise of Ramsay, is almost enough to shake our faith in all contemporary criticism of Reynolds. More majestic and scarcely less beautiful is the portrait of Miss Meyer as Hebe gliding up the rainbow; and there is a divine charm about the St. Agnes (a portrait of Mrs. Quarrington) with her rapt heaven-turned eyes, and her hand clasping the martyr's palm-branch. We find also in this year's exhibition striking portraits of Hickey, and Dr. Robertson the historian, as well as another study from the Ugolino model, who appears this time as a ruffianly captain of banditti. Six pictures in all, and every one of them remarkable.

This year's exhibition contained Zoffany's famous picture of the Academicians, of which the President is naturally the central figure. He is represented listening to Chambers, apparently with no very great interest, and not unwilling to put down the ear-trumpet which he is now holding. The portrait is not a striking one, but we can forgive this as Sir Joshua has left us so many representations of himself, and the picture is of extreme interest, as it contains portraits of the whole of the original Academicians. The two ladies, indeed, are not present *in propriis personis*, but their portraits are hanging on the wall.

This year it was, as we have already seen, that Reynolds was

elected alderman of Plympton; and the pocket-book shows that he was still busy on the "Ugolino." What a contrast between the Plympton alderman and the painter of the tragedy of Pisa! The great picture was at length finished, and found its place in the 1773 exhibition. It is certainly the grandest picture Sir Joshua ever produced, and it is the one on which his fame as an historical painter must mainly rest. The grouping, the attitudes, the technicalities, are, it is needless to say, perfect; but there is far more than this—there is what Reynolds had never shown himself capable of before—immense tragic power. The story of Ugolino's terrible fate is as tragically told in this picture as in Dante's famous lines. The "fear sunk to despair," and the overpowering grief of the father, as well as an inborn nobility which almost triumphs over agony, and a fierce desire for revenge which gives him something akin to hope,—all these conflicting emotions are expressed in Ugolino's face. That the picture attracted crowds, and converted those who had hitherto asserted that the President was a mere portrait-painter, we can well believe. But despite this great success it is as a portrait-painter that his name lives. Why is this? Are the "Ugolino," the "Nativity," the "Infant Jupiter" and the "Cardinal Beaufort" to count for nothing? Not so; but in the first place his historical pictures are few,—we have more than ten times the number of portraits; and many who have never heard of any of the historical works have gazed with delight on a portrait by Sir Joshua. Again, as a portrait-painter Reynolds is unequalled, as a painter of historical subjects he has many a formidable rival; and so it is that while admitting the grandeur of the "Ugolino," we would rather be without that than that Reynolds had never painted Goldsmith, and we would give up "Cardinal Beaufort" for the sake of another "Miss Penelope Boothby."

But the "Ugolino" is not the only great picture Sir Joshua exhibited in 1773. As if to show that he was equally at home in dealing with the awful tragedy of Dante and the simple

THE STRAWBERRY GIRL

idyl of child-life, next in the catalogue to the "Ugolino" stands the "Strawberry Girl."

This is the original picture which was often repeated by the painter, "not so much for the sake of profit," says Northcote, "as for improvement,"—and we know from the same source that Sir Joshua pointed out the "Strawberry Girl" as one of his half-dozen really original pictures. And indeed it well deserves the high place its painter assigned to it. The grace and delicacy of the child are not surpassed, and indeed are unsurpassable, even by Sir Joshua himself.

No less than twelve pictures in all were sent by the President to this year's exhibition, and as Gainsborough, owing to a disagreement with Reynolds, refused to exhibit, it is probable that many of these were sent in at the last moment to fill vacant spaces on the walls. In addition to the two great pictures we have mentioned, there were portraits of the Duke and Duchess of Cumberland, Garrick and his wife, and the Duchess of Buccleugh, as well as another nymph (this time Mrs. Hartley, the actress), and "Bacchus."

Fresh honours await the painter this year. Not only does he become mayor of Plympton, but a more august body—the University of Oxford—confers distinction on itself and him. The list of recipients of honorary degrees this year was large and remarkable. It included Dr. Beattie and Lord Shelburne, besides many other distinguished personages; but Northcote tells us with the honest pride of a biographer that Beattie and Reynolds were the only two to receive either encomiums from the Professor whose duty it was to present the graduates, or extraordinary applause from the spectators. It was in his D.C.L. robes that Reynolds painted himself for the corporation of Plympton, and he was always justly proud of the recognition he had met with from the great University. But Oxford was not the only place he visited this year. He had to go to Plympton to take the necessary oaths, and took the opportunity of visiting once more his old west country friends. Besides these enforced

holidays, he was absent from London in June on a visit to Portsmouth and the Isle of Wight. The fleet, which had Sir Joshua's old friend Lord Edgcumbe as one of its commanders, was assembled at Spithead and reviewed by the king during Reynolds' visit. At the Isle of Wight his host was Thomas FitzMaurice, Lord Shelburne's brother, and himself a great patron of art. In his company the painter explored that beautiful island, for whose scenery even lovely Devon had not spoiled him.

But holiday-making does not take up all his time. There are numerous sitters, and pictures are commenced which are to rank high in the list of his works; and above all a scheme is proposed by Reynolds which, had it been carried out, would have conferred a lasting boon on all lovers of art—the decoration of St. Paul's by the leading artists of the day. This scheme, which originated with Reynolds, had been carefully debated by the Academicians, and had received the sanction of the King, the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Dean of the cathedral, and the Lord Mayor. The painters had chosen their subjects—Reynolds was to paint the Nativity—and all seemed settled, when the unreasoning bigotry of a man who would otherwise have never been remembered—Dr. Terrick, Bishop of London—defeated the whole project. Arguments and persuasion were thrown away upon him; and indeed it was but little use trying the one or the other on a man who declared that while he lived and had the power he would "never suffer the doors of the Metropolitan Church to be opened for the introduction of Popery." His power in the matter was unfortunately unquestionable, and St. Paul's still remains free from the Popery which, according to the Bishop, it was the design of the Royal Academy to introduce.

Mr. Taylor remarks that entries of dinners this year are greatly increased in proportion to those of sitters. One of these dinners led to the writing of some stanzas, in which we get as true and charming a character of Sir Joshua as in the "Retalia-

tion." Dr. Barnard, Dean of Derry, was the author, and they appear to have been written in playful apology for a fracas which took place between him and Johnson at the painter's table; though, indeed, the Dean had little to apologise for, as Johnson seems to have attacked him in the most unprovoked manner, asserting, in reply to a most harmless remark of Barnard's—that "after forty-five years of age a man seldom improves"—"I differ with you, sir: a man *may* improve, and you yourself have great room for improvement." The Dean was not a man to be browbeaten in this fashion, and retorted, "On recollection, I see no cause to alter my opinion; except I was to call it improvement for a man to grow (which I allow he may) positive, rude, and insolent, and save arguments by brutality."

The morning after this scene, Dr. Barnard sent Reynolds a copy of verses, in which he humorously admits the need of improvement, and requests his friend Reynolds first of all to assist him:—

"Dear knight of Plympton, teach me how
To suffer with unclouded brow,
And smile serene as thine,
The jest uncouth, and truth severe,
Like thee to turn my deafest ear,
And calmly drink my wine.
Thou say'st not only skill is gained,
But genius too may be attained
By studious imitation.
Thy temper mild, thy genius fine,
I'll study till I make them mine,
By constant meditation."

The exhibition of 1774 contained no less than thirteen of Reynolds' pictures. The one that attracted most attention was an allegorical one, which represented Dr. Beattie in his D.C.L. robes, with his famous "Essay on Truth," while close beside him an angelic figure is driving off three ill-conditioned objects who stand for Sophistry, Scepticism, and Folly, which the Doctor

is supposed to have utterly vanquished. "The likeness of Dr. Beattie," says his biographer, Sir W. Forbes, "was most striking, and nothing can exceed the beauty of the angel. The whole composition, as well as execution, is in the very best manner of that inimitable painter." Few authors have ever had a higher compliment paid them; though Beattie, perhaps through modesty, refused to take it to himself, and Goldsmith was indignant at what he considered the gross flattery of the picture. "How could you," he asked, "degrade so high a genius as Voltaire" (for one of the vanquished personages resembled and was intended for Voltaire) "before so mean a writer as Dr. Beattie? The existence of Dr. Beattie and his book together will be forgotten in the space of ten years, but your allegorical picture and the fame of Voltaire will live for ever, to your disgrace as a flatterer." A special sadness is given to this criticism when we remember that when the picture he had so condemned was exhibited, Oliver Goldsmith was no more. Probably few felt his death more than Reynolds. Northcote tells us "it was the severest blow Sir Joshua ever received. He did not touch the pencil for that day—a circumstance most extraordinary for him, who passed no day without a line." And the gap could not easily be filled; all that remained was to provide some memorial for his friend, and it is interesting to find that while Johnson composed the stately epitaph, Reynolds it was who selected the place in Westminster Abbey for the monument.

The other pictures by Sir Joshua in this year's exhibition which deserve special notice are the magnificent portrait of Baretti, the graceful and lovely picture of the little Princess Sophia, the exquisite group of Lady Cockburn and her children, in which the famous macaw Northcote speaks of is introduced, and which is noticeable as "one of the only two pictures on which Sir Joshua inscribed his name at length," the fine portraits of young Richard Edgcumbe and Lord Bellamont, and the noble group of the three sisters, Mrs. Beresford, Mrs.

Gardiner, and the Marchioness Townshend, decorating a Temple of Hymen with flowers. Besides these portraits, there is the Infant Jupiter, a vigorous picture, but not equal to the Infant Hercules which he painted some years later for the Empress of Russia.

Gainsborough removed to London in 1774, and very soon attracted numerous sitters. Reynolds' position was, however, too strong to be seriously affected even by so great a rival as Gainsborough, and it is quite in keeping with Sir Joshua's want of anything like envy or jealousy, that he should have taken an early opportunity of calling upon Gainsborough. The latter had, however, not forgotten his quarrel with the Academy, and never returned the visit, nor took any share in the work of the Academy. This was felt by the Council to be such a slight, and so bad a precedent, that in 1775 they resolved to omit Gainsborough's name from their list, and though this motion was rescinded at the General Meeting, it did not tend to improve Gainsborough's feelings towards Reynolds, whom he seems to have regarded as the prime mover in the matter. But jealous and irritable as he was, he was too good a painter and too honest a man not to admit Sir Joshua's great merits, though the compliment was *more suo* bestowed somewhat coarsely. "D—— him, how various he is!" was the comment of the painter who ranks among the highest both in portraiture and landscape.

Nor was Gainsborough the only rival Sir Joshua had to fear. Romney returned from his second visit to Italy in the summer of 1775, and settled down in Cavendish Square, where his studio rapidly became crowded with sitters: indeed, as Thurlow remarked, "There was a Reynolds faction and a Romney faction;" but Romney himself unhesitatingly conferred the highest praise on his rival. "He is the greatest painter that ever lived," he cried in his excitable way; "I see in his pictures an exquisite charm which I see in nature, but in no other pictures." Surely few artists have won such encomiums from their rivals.

Perhaps it is hardly human nature that Reynolds should have been glad of the success of Romney and Gainsborough, but if he was to share his fame with any one, he would have been the first to acknowledge that it was far better that these two great painters should share the town with him, than that he should have been deprived of his sitters by some wretched charlatan who might have degraded English art to the state in which Reynolds found it. But from Gainsborough and Romney there was nothing of the kind to dread: rivals, even supplanters though they might be, the interests of art were safe in their hands. That Sir Joshua could appreciate the former we know from the Fourteenth Discourse, which was devoted to a careful analysis of Gainsborough's style, and in which Reynolds seeks in every way to magnify the merits of his great rival. Of his relations with or opinion of Romney we know nothing; the story which represents Sir Joshua as always alluding to him as "the man in Cavendish Square" is evidently apocryphal, but unfortunately we have no true story to put in its place; and so the matter must rest. There is no longer a Reynolds faction and a Romney faction; each painter has long ago had his true position assigned to him, the one as the greatest of English artists, while the other, though ranking far below him, occupies no ignoble place in the history of portraiture. Another rival, malicious and irritating, but by no means dangerous, was Nathaniel Hone. This man, whose talent for miniature was really considerable, regarded himself as a greater painter than Reynolds, who, according to him, was a charlatan and a plagiarist who stole all his ideas from the old masters, and often spoilt them in the stealing. Starting with this hypothesis, Hone determined to expose Reynolds, and let the public see the true character of this much-vaunted painter. Accordingly, he sent to the exhibition of 1775 a picture which he called "The Pictorial Conjurer displaying the whole Art of Optical Deception." In this painting Reynolds is represented as a conjurer who is clothing the Academic models with garments taken from

well-known pictures which float about the room. The idea is humorous enough, and Reynolds himself never denied that he very frequently got hints as to drapery, attitudes, and grouping from other pictures,—indeed, he prided himself on being eclectic, and defended, nay, advocated, the practice in his Twelfth Discourse. But everything that Reynolds took he made his own; he was very far removed from the servile copyist Hone's caricature would have made him out to be. It is needless to say that the Academy refused to hang the picture; but Hone was not to be prevented from letting the public know the truth about the President, and accordingly held an exhibition of his own pictures, in which the "Conjurer" occupied a prominent position, and no doubt raised many a laugh, without injuring Sir Joshua in the smallest degree.

To this year's exhibition Reynolds sent twelve pictures. The portrait of Dr. Robinson, Primate of Ireland, in half-length, attracted the greatest attention, and Horace Walpole declared that it was the best portrait he had ever painted. The picture is now at Christ Church, Oxford, of which Foundation the Prelate was a distinguished alumnus. It is a wonderfully unconventional portrait: the old man is sitting in the most natural of attitudes, with a book in front of him, from which his attention has been for the moment distracted. It is just one of those portraits which are so thoroughly characteristic of Reynolds: there is that graceful ease, that absence of attitudinising, which Sir Joshua was the first to introduce, and which has ever since his days lent a special beauty to English portraiture. Not quite so original, but more lovely, is the portrait of Mrs. Sheridan as St. Cecilia. It was in 1774 that the town had been talking of the beautiful Miss Linley's marriage with the brilliant Irishman, and when it became known that she was now no longer to sing in public, many raised outcries against what they considered the prudery and jealousy of Sheridan. But he had a staunch supporter in Johnson, who was loud in praise of his noble and unselfish conduct; and here the matter

rested. Mrs. Sheridan did not appear in public any more, but that she was by no means ashamed of her early life is shown by this portrait, in which she takes the form of the beautiful Patron Saint of Song. Besides these, Reynolds painted this year the "Boy with the Cabbage Nets," and Master Crewe as King Henry VIII., though the latter was not exhibited till 1776. What a contrast there is between these two pictures! Master Crewe is evidently determined to look "every inch a king;" he enjoys the fun of the masquerading dress as he stands with his legs wide apart, his hands on his hips, and the Order of the Garter conspicuous on his knee. It is the humour of the conception which strikes him as it strikes us—the idea of this little innocent-faced lad representing bluff King Hal. The attitude of the dog who is sniffing inquiringly at the little king is admirable. Can this this be his young master? or is it some daring intruder, whom it is his duty to expel? To add, if possible, to the beauty of this gem of humorous art, there is a lovely bit of landscape just visible through the open window. The other boy is very different. There is no masquerade for him,—life is far too serious for fancy dress. His dress is that of an ordinary peasant, and in his hands he clasps the nets he has made, and which he hopes to find a purchaser for. A resolute, determined lad this. His life, one may venture to prophesy, was one of hard work, but of work done cheerfully and well. For his companion he has, in place of the rich man's dog, his little sister, whose look of trustful dependence and admiration, as she leans over his shoulder, are most tenderly portrayed. What a love Reynolds had for children, childless though he was himself! What a marvellous knowledge of their ways, and even of their thoughts! With the peer's son or the beggar's child it was the same. The most fastidious critic finds it impossible to discover faults in these child-portraits: the whole soul of the painter has gone into them, and he is as much at home with the gipsy child as with little Lord Morpeth. As Mr. Stephens well observes, "Reynolds of all artists painted

children best . . . knew most of childhood, depicted its appearances in the truest and happiest spirit of comedy, entered into its changeful soul with the tenderest, heartiest sympathy, played with the playful, sighed with the sorrowful, and mastered all the craft of infancy."

We are apt to think that child-life in the eighteenth century must have been a most dreary thing—the children we read of in "Sandford and Merton" and the "Young Spectator" are indeed fearful and wonderful; they are "*progenies* of virtue;" in other words atrocious little prigs, or thoroughly and despicably bad and mean. There is nothing else. At the beginning of the book one boy is labelled "bad," and bad he remains to the end, the end frequently being a violent one. The other, the good boy, never commits faults, or if he does, immediately repents, and returns to the dreary level of goodness, and closes his career as far as the book is concerned by becoming a worthy gentleman. It is the old story of the industrious and idle apprentices repeated *ad nauseam*. There is nothing merry, lovable, or attractive about the good boy, while the bad boy is such a horrid little beast as to excite little else than disgust; though I am not sure that he is not the better of the two after all. Such is the child-life of the last century as read in books: that it never existed in reality it seems hard to deny; but that it was the ordinary life, Sir Joshua's pictures entirely disprove. His children are not of one age, but of all time. They are true types of childhood in all ages. Graceful and tender,—often, if you like, wilful and petulant, but always gracious and entirely lovable. The miserable formalism of the eighteenth century did no doubt sometimes crush out all that was natural and beautiful in the child's life, did cramp the young mind and fetter the imagination, did its best to grind away all that makes childhood delightful, did produce prigs and scoundrels; but, thank God! its action and its influence was but partial. Nature, strong and vigorous as she is, was too much for Puritanism, and in the whole of Sir Joshua's gallery of child-portraits there

are none who have not a healthy, natural, and unrestrained appearance, so entirely at variance with Puritan principles. An age which could give us such children as Master Crewe, the Cockburns, Penelope Boothby, and "Muscipula," could not have been quite such an artificial age as we are sometimes apt to think. That Reynolds was an abhorrer of artificiality, his pictures alone prove; and Northcote tells us that Sir Joshua always contended that the natural gestures of children were graceful, and that it was the dancing-school which gave them any distortion or unnatural attitudes. Many are the stories which are told of the way in which Reynolds took advantage of any happy incident to get an idea for an attitude. For instance, in the famous picture of the Russell family painted in 1777, by far the most natural and expressive attitude is that of little Lord William, who is represented crouching in terror against the wall. The attitude fits in admirably with the idea of the picture—the victory of St. George over the dragon,—but it was obtained entirely by chance. Lord William was naughty, and would not be painted; and when brought into the room, "huddled himself against the wall in sulky anger and distrust." The painter at once perceived that the boy had unconsciously placed himself in exactly the right attitude, and exclaiming, "Keep where you are, my little man," proceeded to paint him there and then.

In 1775, Northcote, who had been with Reynolds five years, and was now twenty-nine years of age, left him to set up for himself. He met with a fair meed of success, but never became a great painter—lacking originality, and contenting himself with imitating first Sir Joshua, and afterwards Opie. Reynolds' parting words of advice to his pupil betray the conscious pride of the founder of a new school of painting: "Now to succeed in your art, you are to remember that something more is to be done than that which did formerly; Kneller, Lely and Hudson will not do now." Perhaps it was rather unfair to class Kneller, and especially Lely, with such a man as Hudson; but the advice was thoroughly sound, and, compared with

P 56

MUSCIPULA

Reynolds, there is not so very much difference after all between the three painters.

Northcote, whose Memoirs of Reynolds must always be the best authority for this period of the painter's life, here makes a pause, and indulges his thoughts in the pleasing recollection of many little circumstances and matters of observation which occurred during the space of five years which he spent in Sir Joshua's company. Some of the anecdotes he relates are trivial to the last degree, but some are so characteristic of Reynolds that they must find a place in any biography of him. Northcote's apology for recording these "trifles" is charmingly modest. He admits that many of the stories might have been omitted, "but," he adds, "as it is all truth, and several of the circumstances are worth preserving, I was unwilling to make myself the judge by a selection, and therefore have risked the danger of giving too many lest I should fall into the worse fault of giving too few." The present writer, however, not having four hundred quarto pages at his disposal, has been compelled to make but a small selection, and must refer the reader for further anecdotes to the veracious Northcote.

"On speaking to him concerning a friend of his who was dying of a lingering disease, for which he was sensible there was no possible cure, it was remarked of this person that his situation seemed to excite in him the utmost degree of impatience and terror, and that he appeared like a criminal under sentence of death. Sir Joshua observed 'that we are all under sentence of death; but that his warrant was signed.'"

"A young painter, who was showing his performance to him in order to have his opinion and instruction upon it, when the faults were pointed out to him excused himself by saying he had committed the error by following the dictates of his employer, whom he wished to please. Sir Joshua would not allow such a reason to be any palliation of his faults, adding, 'It is you who are to understand your own business, not your employer.'"

"Mr. Edmund Burke, when in conversation with Sir Joshua, remarked to him the peculiar advantages which certain situations gave to those who chose to make use of them: 'For instance, you, Sir Joshua, from your character and the opportunities you have by your profession of being so much in private with persons of the highest rank and power, at moments also when they are at leisure and in good humour, might obtain favours from them which would give you a patronage almost equal to that of a prime minister.' 'There is some truth in what you say,' answered Sir Joshua, 'but how could I presume to ask favours from those to whom I became known only by my obligations to them?'"

"I have heard him say that whenever a new sitter came to him for a portrait, he always began it with a full determination to make it the best picture he had ever painted; neither would he allow it to be an excuse for his failure to say, 'The subject was a bad one for a picture'; there was always nature, he would observe—which if well treated was fully sufficient for the purpose."

Besides these anecdotes, I cannot resist quoting some of the aphorisms which Northcote took down from his master's lips, many of which are wonderfully epigrammatic.

"Polite behaviour and a refined address, like good pictures, make the least show to ordinary eyes."

"Grandeur is composed of straight lines; genteelness and elegance, of serpentine lines."

"Simplicity is an exact medium between too little and too much."

"A good portrait painter may not be capable of painting history, but an historical painter has for certain the ability to paint portraits."

"Rules are very necessary to, but will never make a painter. They should be used as servants, and subject to us, not we to them."

We get a glimpse of Sir Joshua in 1776 from Hannah More,

who revisited London in that year. Her fame as a poetess was then considerable, and her vivacity and simple pleasant manners gained her many friends among the great men of the day. Early in this year she had a private view of the pictures Reynolds was preparing for the Academy, and the criticisms she bestows on them in the letter to her sister are extremely sensible. The religious bent of her mind naturally attracted her to the Infant Samuel and the St. John. "I wish," she writes, "you could see a picture Sir Joshua has just finished of the prophet Samuel on his being called. 'The gaze of young astonishment' was never so beautifully expressed. Sir Joshua tells me that he is exceedingly mortified when he shows this picture to some of the great—they ask him who Samuel was. I told him he must get somebody to make an oratorio of Samuel, and then it would not be vulgar to confess they knew something of him. . . . He has also done a St. John that bids fair for immortality. . . . I love this great genius for not being ashamed to take his subjects from the most unfashionable of books."

But art-critics of the present day have not endorsed Hannah More's eulogium. They assert, and with a certain degree of truth, that Reynolds was not a religious painter,—all his faces are of the earth earthy, there is nothing ethereal about them. The Holy Family has nothing more divine about it than the Bedford Family has; the Nativity is not the great miraculous birth which is to alter the whole destiny of mankind. This may be granted, but still one must allow that, from the point of view of religious fervour, these are the worst pictures that Reynolds ever painted, and that it is not fair to class the Infant Samuel and the Moses in the Bulrushes with them. To my mind, the Samuel in particular is thoroughly typical of English religious ideas, and is precisely the picture we should expect from the most national of our painters. England could never produce a great religious painter, for what religious enthusiasm there is in the English character has always taken an

entirely opposite direction. The preacher, not the painter, the philanthropist, not the ascetic, the statesman, not the mystic, are the types of English religious life. Raphael, Correggio, even Murillo, rank very far above Reynolds as sacred painters; but in what a different world of thought did they live! England could no more have produced them than she could have given birth to St. Francis or to Dante. And it is just because it is such a genuinely English picture, that the Infant Samuel has always enjoyed such popularity. A severe critic of Reynolds as a religious painter allows this, and, curiously enough, uses it as an argument against the picture. "The Infant Samuel," says Mr. Stephens sneeringly, "turns up everywhere in England, has been engraved under more names than any of Reynolds' pictures, and is to be seen in every country;—tawdry coloured lithographs from Berlin; steel-plate impressions from Vienna; Parisian etchings of the commonest order; English woodcuts, lithographs, copper-plate engravings, and every other means of reproduction have been employed for it; it has appeared even on anchovy and jam pots." True enough,—but what does this prove? As far as the argument amounts to anything, it seems to mean that the more popular a picture is, the worse it must necessarily be. With critics of this school the old proverb is reversed, and it is "Vox populi, vox diaboli." Personally, I prefer the notion which attributes a diviner origin to popular sentiment. To my mind, the Infant Samuel is the outcome of the best type of English religious sentiment, and I trust it will long continue to enjoy its present popularity. And, after all, is it natural to expect anything very ethereal, very divine in an Infant Samuel? True, he had been set apart for the service of God,—true, he had a mighty destiny; but was he conscious of anything to distinguish him from the other boys who attended on the high-priest? He is ignorant whence the voice that calls him comes, or at most the idea of a divine message is only just beginning to dawn upon him. In the case of the Madonna it is very different, and both in

THE HOLY FAMILY (*in the National Gallery*).

the Nativity and the Holy Family I freely admit that Sir Joshua has entirely failed,—indeed, I hold the former to be in many ways by far the worst picture he ever painted,—but I cannot allow that the criticisms which apply to the portraits of the Virgin or the Infant Saviour apply at all to those of Moses or Samuel.

While on the subject of Reynolds' sacred pictures, I will allude to the "Child Angels," although this picture was not painted till 1786. As is well known, it consists of simply five different representations of the same face—that of Frances Gordon. The perfect loveliness of the picture is beyond dispute. "But," say the critics, "where is that seraphic expression we look for in angels?" These are human faces, it is true, but can you imagine any purer, more innocent, more gentle faces? What ideal can he have who demands more than this? The whole question, in fact, resolves itself into one of sentiment, and I for one am perfectly content to accept these faces as those of the most lovely beings God ever created.

CHAPTER V.

(A.D. 1776 TO A.D. 1783.)

DILETTANTI SOCIETY—FIRST ACADEMY EXHIBITION.

THE 1776 pictures are very fine. In addition to the Master Crewe, we have a portrait of the lovely Duchess of Devonshire, and a magnificent half-length of Lord Temple; Master Herbert as Bacchus (another of these quaint masquerading portraits), Omiah the Otaheitian, and the very fine picture of Mrs. Montague, besides two studies of children, one of which is styled The Child Daniel, but is in reality the Samuel which Hannah More so greatly admired, the other representing the Young St. John. Concerning Omiah, Mr. Taylor gives much amusing information, and relates how he was brought over to England by Captain Furneaux, and at once became the greatest "lion" of the day,—how his polished and gentle bearing charmed every one, and how he was fêted wherever he went. The portrait is a very fine one: Omiah is to Reynolds the wild noble savage, and as such wears an intensely unrealistic but very becoming costume, which, contrasting as it does with his swarthy face, has an extremely good effect. The portrait of Garrick, which also finds a place in this year's exhibition, is a masterpiece: it is one of those living representations which seem to tell one at a glance what the sitter was. The mobility of feature and the bright keen eyes mark the man as having been either a great actor or a brilliant

orator, while the vigour of the frame and the resoluteness of the attitude bespeak a man of great power and great endurance,—and such Garrick was throughout his career, which was now coming to an end. That two of Reynolds' finest pictures should have been portraits of Garrick is very interesting, for, as has been well remarked, their characters and careers were not altogether dissimilar. "Both had broken loose from a dreary, artificial, monotonous school of copyists, and reverted to the freshness, the spirit, and variety of nature. Both had joined unwearied study to intuitive genius. . . . Both had advanced the dignity of their callings by their morals, their manners, their intelligence and social charm, as well as by their transcendent excellence in their professions. . . . Both had risen from poverty to wealth, both were accused by the malignant of avarice, and both united generosity to prudence."

We have no list of sitters for 1776, but Mr. Taylor has transcribed from the price-book a list of the pictures paid for this year, which shows that, despite the rivalry of Gainsborough and Romney, not to mention painters of less merit, Reynolds was able to adhere to his charges, and obtained a hundred guineas each for his Samuel and St. John.

In 1777, Sir Joshua, who held the position of Painter to the Dilettanti Society, commenced his famous portraits of the members of that Society, which consist of two groups of seven persons each. The word "Dilettante" has been much abused, and has fallen from its high estate, till it has got to signify little more than a dabbler and an idler. But the Dilettanti of Reynolds' portraits are far more than this, as the names of Henry Dundas, Lord Mulgrave, Payne Gallwey, and Stanhope are sufficient to prove. They were all of them connoisseurs of no mean order,—all of them actuated by a real love of art, and a desire to encourage it. They undertook the publication of valuable works, they established studentships to enable young artists to proceed to Italy, and in numerous other ways acte as beneficent patrons. The portraits were not completed till

1780, but the Society was fully repaid for the time it had to wait. The likenesses appear to be excellent, the grouping (no easy matter in such cases) is very effective, and the pictures show that Sir Joshua was thoroughly conversant alike with the characters of the different members, and the objects of the Club. The picture of the Marlborough Family belongs to this year, and (an unusual circumstance) was not painted in Sir Joshua's studio. This great picture seems to have occupied Reynolds a very considerable time. He appears to have been at Blenheim the whole of August, and again in November, and every detail is elaborated with the greatest care. And the sitters were worthy of the artist. Rarely do we find such an amount of personal beauty in a family group: the Duke and Duchess were strikingly handsome, and they transmitted their good looks to all their children, six of whom appear in this picture. The grouping is admirable, the individual figures excellent, and the classic surroundings most effective. If we must criticise this grand work of art, I should be inclined to object to the do-nothing attitudes of most of the group. The only "action" in the picture is in the child who holds the mask in front of her face, to the terror of her little sister, and the indignant astonishment of the dogs. This idea was, it is said, suggested to Sir Joshua by some such incident as that which determined the attitude of Lord William Russell in the Bedford group, and is most effectively worked out.

The Marlborough picture was sent by Sir Joshua to the exhibition of 1778, together with a fine half-length of the Archbishop of York, and two other portraits. Mr. Taylor tells us what a narrow escape the great picture had just before it was exhibited. Sir Joshua goodnaturedly lent it to a young artist of the name of Powell to copy. Now Powell was unfortunately in debt, and one fine morning the bailiffs paid a visit to his room. The artist escaped, but "the picture was seized by the creditor, who determined that the best way of making his money out of it would be to cut out the heads, and the dogs,

and sell them separately. Luckily, Sir Joshua heard what was in the wind, and Ralph Kirkley (Reynolds' servant) was sent with a cheque to redeem the picture."

The lovely picture of Mrs. Payne Gallwey (whose husband figures in the Dilettanti groups) with her child riding "pick-a-back," belongs to this year. The little girl clings to her mother's shoulder, half afraid of tumbling, but all the while proud of her lofty position, while the mother supports the baby with her hands, and seems to enjoy the fun of being painted in this attitude. The landscape is very beautiful, and is another proof of the folly of regarding Reynolds merely as a portrait-painter. It is true we have scarcely a landscape *pur et simple* from his brush, but the backgrounds of his pictures show that had he entered the lists he need not have feared comparison in this style of art even with Wilson or Gainsborough.

A considerable portion of this year was taken up with the "Nativity" and the "Virtues," which were designed for the west window of New College Chapel, Oxford. Of the Nativity I have already spoken—it is not a great picture. The grouping is of course good, but the unity of the picture is destroyed by the angel (a very substantial one), who is flying above the central figures. The original picture has perished by fire, and the tracery of the window fortunately hides this great blemish. The Seven Virtues beneath are as lovely as anything Sir Joshua ever painted, and are well worthy of the noble chapel of William of Wykeham. The central figure of Charity is particularly striking, and affords an instance of the truth of the dictum that Reynolds is at his best when painting children. The motherly tenderness of Charity, for which Mrs. Sheridan sat, is even surpassed by the clinging, trustful children whom she is protecting.

Next year, 1779, is memorable for the trial and triumphant acquittal of Reynolds' old friend, Keppel. In gratitude for the professional assistance he received from Dunning, Erskine, and Lee (who were the counsel for the defence), and the sympathy

bestowed on him by Burke, the Admiral had four portraits of himself painted by Sir Joshua, and presented them to his friends. The King and Queen also sat to the President this year, it being the desire of the Royal Academy that their portraits should hang in the new rooms in Somerset House.

Miss Monckton, the great heiress and blue-stocking, was among the sitters for 1779, and it is wonderful how Sir Joshua has lent a charm and almost a beauty to this extremely plain young lady. The attitude is graceful, and one well-nigh forgets the unattractiveness of the face in the loveliness of the *entourage*, while the attitude cleverly conceals the clumsiness of her figure.

More than one of Reynolds' friends pass away in this year. His old master, Hudson, bad painter as he was, was no doubt sincerely mourned by the great painter. What thoughts must have crowded on Reynolds' mind when he heard of Hudson's death! How he must have looked back to the days when his ambition had been to tread in his footsteps! How he must have marvelled at the state of art which had allowed Hudson to occupy the high position he did! And with all this there must have been mingled a sincere gratitude to that man from whom he had learnt the first principles of his art, and without whose generosity he would never have become a painter.

But however Sir Joshua may have mourned Hudson, his greatest grief this year must have been at the almost sudden death of Garrick—his Club-companion and intimate friend, and whose character he has so clearly portrayed both with pen and pencil. There is something, I think, of pathos, in the simple entry, "Mr. Garrick," which occurs in the pocket-book under February 1st. It was on that day that the great actor was borne to his last resting-place in Westminster Abbey.

From Miss Burney's Diary we get many extremely interesting anecdotes of Reynolds at this time. She ranked as one of his intimates; and gossip, never tired of marrying the bachelor, coupled their names together. I can do no more than allude to this charming book, from which space forbids my quoting; but

to every one who wishes to get a clear idea of society during the latter part of the eighteenth century, the perusal of the memoirs of this accomplished and vivacious authoress is so necessary, that I omit quotation with less compunction.

In 1780 Reynolds painted for Horace Walpole the beautiful group of the Ladies Waldegrave—a picture well worth the eight hundred guineas which is said to have been paid for it. It is indeed as charming a picture as any of the great master's: the beauty of the sisters seems to be enhanced by the air of sadness in their faces. All three had been destined brides this year, but in each case the engagement had come to an untimely end. Very different, but equally striking, is the admirable portrait of the "Luminous Gibbon," which appeared in this year's exhibition, whither the President also sent the design for "Justice" in the New College window, a lovely portrait of Miss Beauclerk, as "heavenly Una," a full-length of Prince William of Gloucester, and three other portraits.

This exhibition was the first held in Somerset House, where the Academy now had a local habitation more worthy of the importance it had attained to than its former humble abodes. I quote the following description of the rooms occupied by the Academy from a contemporary source—the *Gentleman's Magazine* for May 1780:—

"The right wing of the buildings is appropriated to the Royal Academy. The exhibition room of sculpture and drawings is on the ground floor; it is plain and unornamented. . . . The library is on the first floor. It is a small room, but elegantly ornamented with a painted ceiling. The centre represents *Theory*,* by Sir *Joshua Reynolds*. She is described sitting on a cloud, darting her eye through the expanse, and holding a scroll in her hand on which is written, 'Theory is the knowledge of what is truly nature.' This piece possesses a most beautiful lightness, and the figure seems rather to hover

* Theory is not here opposed to practice, but is the Greek θεωρία, a looking at, and so generally, science, speculation.

in the air, than to have any settled seat. In the Coves are also emblematical pieces representing *Design*, *Character*, *Commerce*, and *Plenty*, by Cipriani. Over the chimney is a bust of *His Majesty*, by *Carlini*. It is a strong, expressive likeness. Under the bust is a *basso relievo* of *Cupid and Psyche;* by *Nollekens*, which is delicately executed. . . . The *Lecture Room* is spacious, elegant, and well-proportioned. The ceiling is painted in compartments, and the style does honour to the genius of Sir *William Chambers*. The centre compartment represents *The Graces unveiling Nature*. And the four next to it are *The Elements*. These emblematical pieces are the productions of Mr. *West*. In four small circles are the heads of ancient artists, *Apelles*, *Archimedes*, *Apollodorus*, and *Phidias*, by *Biaggi*. At each end of the ceiling *Angelica Kauffman* has exerted her very utmost powers. The pieces represent *Genius*, *Design*, *Composition*, and *Painting*. . . . In the end of the room fronting the door we are struck with two noble pictures of *their Majesties*, by Sir *Joshua Reynolds*. The *King* is sitting in the coronation chair in *Westminster Hall*, with all the insignia of royalty. The *Queen* is also drawn sitting in the chair of state, and drest in her royal robes. In the right-hand corner of the room there is a most beautiful picture of *Samuel and Eli*, by Mr. *Copley*. . .. . Over the door of the exhibition room there is a painting in *basso relievo* of the *Heads of their Majesties*, in a medallion, supported by *Design* and *Painting*. And on the top of the door we read the following motto, imitated from that of *Pythagoras:*

'οὐδεὶς Ἀμουσος Εἰσίτω.'

'Let none but Men of Taste presume to enter.'

The grand exhibition room is noble and spacious, measuring about sixty feet by fifty. It is very judiciously lighted by four arched windows, which distribute an equal light over the whole. The ceiling is painted with a tender sky, and has a very good effect. . . . On the whole, there is a taste both in the contrivance and execution of the plan of the rooms which does

high honour to the artist; and even without the paintings they would be worthy the admiration of the public."

The opening of the new rooms seems to have produced a race of art critics whose observations are quoted by Northcote, and at greater length in the *Gentleman's Magazine* for July 1780. As usual, there was the optimist and the pessimist critic: the former is astonished at the rapid progress of the Academy, which "has already made Britain the seat of arts; and in painting, sculpture, and engraving it rivals, if it does not excel, all the other schools in Europe." The other critic takes a more gloomy view, and while appreciating Reynolds, both as a painter and an art-teacher, cannot but perceive a mortifying disparity in the best of these pieces in the late exhibition when placed in competition with the works "of ancient Greece and Rome, or of the modern Italian or Flemish schools."

Without endorsing the opinions of either of these learned critics, we may content ourselves with noting the difference between the state of English art in 1753, when Reynolds came to London, and the position it had attained in 1780. An enumeration of names is sufficient. In 1753 England had to be content with Hudson and Ellis, Pine, Cotes, and Hayman; in 1780 she could boast of Reynolds and Gainsborough, Copley and West, Wright, Wilson, and Romney.

But we must pass on, merely noting by the way that the exhibition, whatever its merits, was a great pecuniary success, more than £3000 being taken at the doors. The year 1780 saw London for a whole week given up to the insane fury of a mob, led by the half-crazy fanatic Lord George Gordon. The scene must have been enough to try even Sir Joshua's equanimity, and no doubt he was glad to escape from the turbulent city and pay his long-promised visit to Lord Darnley at Cobham. Nor was this his only holiday. In July he is at Cheveley with the Duke of Rutland, in August he visits Keppel, and in September once more re-seeks his beloved Devon, where he still finds many old friends to welcome him.

In 1781 he goes further afield, and in company with Mr. Metcalfe makes the tour of the Low Countries. The "Notes" he made during this trip were published after his death, and are valuable, not only for the art-criticisms they contain, but the interesting descriptions of the country and the manners of the people. Sir Joshua's keen eye detected the grave faults of Rubens and his school, but candidly admitted their wonderful technical skill, and aptly remarks that young painters could nowhere learn the rudiments of their art better than from the Dutch school. That Reynolds should have failed to appreciate Rembrandt is not surprising. Titian was his ideal master: he would willingly have ruined himself, he told Northcote in an unusual burst of enthusiasm, to possess one really great picture by Titian—and Rembrandt and Titian are as the poles asunder. The magnificent effects which the great Dutch painter produced were thrown away on the admirer of a school which scarcely did more than recognise the existence of *chiaroscuro*.

The visit to Holland was a very pleasant one. The fame of the English painter ensured every facility being given him of seeing the picture-galleries, and the President of the Dutch Academy was proud to act as his *cicerone*. So much was there to be seen, and so much hospitality to be received, that the travellers were absent nearly two months, and even then sight-seeing and hospitality were not exhausted, and two years later Sir Joshua paid another visit to Flanders.

The exhibition of 1781 contained no less than fourteen pictures by Reynolds. Chief among these is the lovely group of the Ladies Waldegrave, though the portrait of Master Bunbury is perhaps more characteristic of the master. The child (a son of Goldsmith's Miss Horneck) is a charming specimen of eighteenth-century boyhood as he leans against the mossy bank, his hair falling idly over his face and shoulders, and his hands resting on his thighs. He seems to be earnestly watching the painter who is reproducing him on the canvas: there is a look in his eyes as if he was longing

to rush forward to have a look at the picture, and see if it is really like him; but he has promised to keep still and be good, so he controls himself. For some reason or other the picture remained in Sir Joshua's possession, and in his will he bequeathed it to the boy's mother. But not only do we find in this exhibition the lovely maidens and the high-spirited lad: to this year belongs "The Sleeping Child," scarcely less lovely than the other pictures. Wonderfully natural is the quaint attitude of the baby as it hangs one hand over its cot in its dreamless slumber, while through the open window we catch a glimpse of a fair landscape which shows that it is the mid-day sleep of the child the painter is depicting. The historical picture of the year, Dido, is not impressive. It is too stagey and melodramatic, and altogether is one of the least satisfactory of Sir Joshua's pictures. It is certainly surpassed by the Thais, painted as Dryden represents her with a flambeau in her hand, when she "led the way . . . and like another Helen, fired another Troy."

Among the portraits, those of Dr. Burney, the author of "The History of Music," and Lord Richard Cavendish, are the best. Two more of the New College "Virtues" are exhibited this year —"Fortitude," with the lion by her side, and "Temperance," holding a mirror in her hand. As an illustration of that generosity which Allan Cunningham denied to Reynolds, it is perhaps worth while inserting a letter of thanks from Johnson. Mr. Taylor conjectures that it refers to Mauritius Lowe, the Doctor's godson, "an improvident and helpless man," who, despite Johnson's repeated efforts on his behalf, failed to become either a respectable painter or a respectable member of society. Be this as it may, the letter is wonderfully characteristic alike of the writer and the recipient, and it is a fortunate circumstance that it has been preserved:—

"Dear Sir,—It was not before yesterday that I received your splendid benefaction. To a hand so liberal in distributing, I hope nobody will envy the power of acquiring. "I am, dear Sir, yours, etc.,

"SAM. JOHNSON."

My space is limited, otherwise I should like to give my readers another letter—this time from Sir Joshua to a favourite niece "Offy," whom we may remember as the original of "The Strawberry Girl." She was this year married to Mr. Gwatkin, and on this occasion received congratulatory letters from her uncle and Burke, for which I must refer my readers to the pages of Messrs. Leslie and Taylor.

Sir Joshua had now arrived at an age when each year witnesses the death of some friend and companion, whose vacant place can never be filled by a new acquaintance. Goldsmith, Beauclerk, and Garrick were gone; and this year Thrale—the worthy brewer whose chief, indeed only title to fame is through his wife and his friends—dies suddenly, and the pleasant house where "all the wits of the town" had so often met is shut up.

In the list of sitters we find the name of Lord Chancellor Thurlow, whom Reynolds appears to have portrayed only too faithfully, thus earning for himself from that great master of abuse the character of "a great scoundrel and a bad painter," which, however, like many other dicta of that wisest-looking of men, posterity has, curiously enough, refused to endorse.

In 1782 Sir Joshua painted Mrs. Robinson, better known as "Perdita," whose affection for the Prince of Wales sheds some little romance over "the first gentleman in Europe;" a little boy whom history knows as Beau Brummell, but who was then scarcely more than an infant; and the eccentric genius Beckford. Besides these, the other noticeable picture by Reynolds in the exhibition was a portrait of Mrs. Baldwin, the wife of the British Consul at Smyrna, "seated on cushions in the eastern fashion, and habited in Greek costume." It is pleasant to have to record that this exhibition seems to have brought about a *rapprochement* between Reynolds and Gainsborough. It was in 1782 that Gainsborough exhibited his famous "Girl and Pigs," which he modestly valued at only sixty guineas. The President, at once perceiving its striking merits, became himself the purchaser, but insisted on paying

a hundred guineas for it. This led to a request from Gainsborough that he might be allowed to paint Sir Joshua's portrait; accordingly in the winter Reynolds sat to him, but an untoward event prevented the completion of the picture, for after the first sitting Sir Joshua had a somewhat severe paralytic stroke, which necessitated his immediately hurrying off to Bath, then at the height of its fame as the resort alike of health-seekers and pleasure-seekers. Here he remained for a fortnight, and appears to have thoroughly recovered his health, but the sittings to Gainsborough were not resumed. Probably Reynolds found arrears of work waiting to be finished, and there was no time for him to sit to any one, or it may be that Gainsborough's friendliness had evaporated by this time.

If Art suffered a loss this year by the death of Richard Wilson, that most neglected of men, whose entreaties were scarce sufficient to induce the public even to look at his pictures in his lifetime, and whose true position has only gradually and grudgingly been recognised, there was a counteracting advantage to him from the fact that the exhibition of 1782 was the first in which the name of Opie appears. This self-taught genius came up to London in company with the bold lampooner Dr. Wolcot, better known under his *nom de plume* of Peter Pindar. This worthy was a fellow-countryman of Sir Joshua's, and in his "Lyric Odes to the Royal Academicians," which he published this year, the President receives the highest praise—but judiciously mingled with subtle criticism. His verse runs smoothly enough, and the whole poem is full of humorous hints at the various painters of the day, by a man who had a sound and thorough knowledge of the principles of Art. His concluding verse on Reynolds runs thus:—

"Yet, Reynolds, let me fairly say,
With pride I pour the lyric lay
To most things by thy able hand exprest—
Compared to other painting men,
Thou art an angel to a wren."

This year Sir Joshua's old friend Mason, once esteemed a poet, now known to be a poetaster of the feeblest type, produced a translation of Du Fresnoy's "Art of Painting," a work of no great merit either for matter or style, and which owes whatever fame it has to Reynolds having supplied some interesting notes, which admirably illustrate the principles laid down in the Discourses; and certainly Mason was too extravagant in his praise when he speaks of these notes pouring "on Fresnoy's rules a fuller day."

Early in 1782 Moser, the Keeper of the Academy, died, and Reynolds as President composed an obituary notice. An honest, kindly old man he would seem to have been, more distinguished as a metal-worker than a painter, an admirable disciplinarian, who could "keep order in the Academy, and make himself respected, without the austerity or importance of office," and such a good man of business that all the societies he belonged to "always turned their eyes upon him for their treasurer and chief manager." He plays an important part in the attempts which preceded the foundation of the Royal Academy, and forms an interesting link between Thornhill and Hogarth, and Reynolds and Opie.

Many stories are told which illustrate the readiness of Sir Joshua to assist rising genius, but perhaps none is more striking than the one which recounts the pains he took to advance Crabbe, who had come up to London with his poems ready to be published; and only waited for the patron—a necessity to every literary man in the eighteenth century. He had at length found this patron in Burke, who was not a man to do things by halves, but at once introduced him to Reynolds. The painter proved a firm friend to the young poet, frequently invited him to his house, and submitted one of his poems, "The Village," to Dr. Johnson. The literary dictator praised it highly, Dodsley agreed to publish it, and the poet's fame was assured.

The exhibition of 1783 contained no great picture by Sir Joshua, and his friends began to fear that he had already passed

his zenith, and that his paralytic attack had prevented his ever producing again a really great picture. Mortifying this must have been to the President, who would have been the first to own that he was but poorly represented in the exhibition; and particularly galling at a time when his rival and inveterate enemy, Barry, was attracting crowds and gaining immense reputation by the exhibition of his designs for the decoration of the Society of Arts' Room. Posterity has endorsed the opinion of the best critics of the day, and places Barry's designs on a far lower level than Reynolds' historical pictures; but for the moment the good sense of the public deserted it, and eager crowds asserted that Barry's incomparable genius would now at length be acknowledged. And indeed there was something very noble in the manner this uncouth, ignorant, and passionate man had worked. Nothing could daunt him; nothing make him alter his style by a hair's breadth. He might have acquired a fortune as a portrait-painter, but he would be content with nothing less than the "grand style." History or allegory, treated with the most rigid classicism, was all he would attempt. So for years he goes on, neglected by the public, often with scarcely enough to keep body and soul together, but never relaxing his efforts, never swerving from his determination. And now he has his reward. Nor would we grudge it him, false as we know his principles to have been, but for the unmeasured abuse and the libellous scurrility with which he attacked the gentlest and sweetest of men. With Barry, Reynolds is a quack and a hypocrite, who used his position to crush his rivals,—a mean, avaricious man, whose despicable character was mirrored in his tawdry and worthless pictures. It is the old story of the unsuccessful man using every means, fair or foul, to pull down the hated rival from his pinnacle of fame; and the result is always the same: the great man remains firm and placid amidst all the rude and bitter assaults, while the rant of the libeller is scattered to the winds and remembered no longer.

Once only did Barry wring from Reynolds anything like a response, and this half in banter. "It is a very bad state of mind to hate anybody, but I fear I do hate Barry," Sir Joshua remarked to Northcote; but no other notice was taken of this Ishmael of painters. In 1782 he was elected to the Professorship of Painting at the Academy, when, instead of aiming at instruction, he seems to have regarded his new position as giving him fresh opportunities for abuse of all his rivals, and attacks on the "wretched business of face-painting." A strange being, surely, for when he finds that the President does not deign to answer him, he not only ceases to attack, but actually in Sir Joshua's dispute with the Academy gives him his support, and after his death lauds to the skies the man he has reviled, and the pictures he has abused.

Sir Joshua was hard at work this year on his greatest picture —the portrait of Mrs. Siddons, but found leisure for many a little holiday. At one time we hear of him at Belvoir, where his *protégé* Crabbe was enstalled as chaplain, at another time he is with Lord Harcourt at Nuneham; and he is able to pay a flying visit to his dear old Devonshire friends at Saltram and Mount Edgcumbe, Port Elliot and Plympton, besides running over to Flanders to renew his acquaintance with Rubens and the Dutch masters, but chiefly to acquire some of those pictures which the ecclesiastical policy of the Emperor was compelling the Flemish monks to dispose of.

CHAPTER VI.

(A.D. 1784 TO A.D. 1792.)

MRS. SIDDONS—BOYDELL GALLERY.

THE year 1784 is in many ways a most important one in our painter's career. It saw the exhibition of his greatest picture, and the death of his greatest friend. Never had Reynolds been stronger than in the 1784 exhibition. There are no historical or religious pictures, but we have the beautiful groups of Lady Dashwood and her child, and Lady Honywood and children, the magnificent portraits of Fox and Warton, the charming representation of Mrs. Abington as Roxalana, and above all the masterpiece of Mrs. Siddons as the Tragic Muse. Wolcot does not criticise this year's exhibition, or he would have at once retracted his last year's opinion, "We've lost Sir Joshua." The worshippers of Barry were in a hopeless minority, and Reynolds once more resumed his true place in the world of Art.

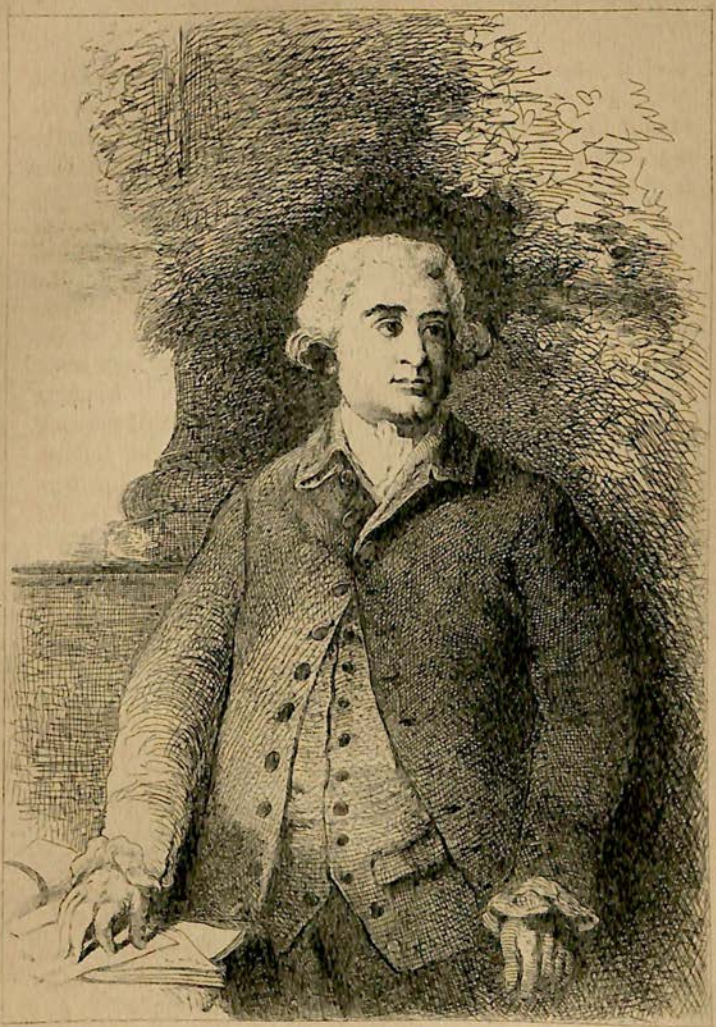
To my mind the portrait of Warton, which hangs in the Common Room of Trinity College, Oxford, is one of the very finest of Sir Joshua's portraits. It is in a magnificent state of preservation, and possesses every quality that a good portrait should have—that blending of the real with the ideal, that character and force, that grace and beauty which we so rarely meet with combined in the same picture. A fine type of the eighteenth century "Don" was Thomas Warton,—not a great

poet it may be allowed, but a ripe scholar and an appreciative critic, and who shares with Bishop Percy the honour of rekindling a love for our early poetry, and so helping to wean the world from its admiration of Beattie and Mason, and other tenth-rate imitators of an exotic style.

Not less characteristic is the portrait of Fox, who this year wins the famous Westminster election, but whose political character has received a stain which nothing can efface. His desire that the painter should docket one of the papers upon the table "A Bill for the better regulating the affairs of the E. I. Company," savours more of effrontery than any other quality—for whatever Fox's motives may have been in bringing forward his India Bill, the verdict of History upon that measure is that it was one of the worst ever proposed by an English minister. He was now reaping the fruits of his unscrupulousness: driven from office, and deserted by many of his old friends, he had the mortification of seeing his great rival becoming every day stronger, and his own position more and more unbearable. The picture gives us the best side of Fox's character. His resolution, manliness, and courage are admirably depicted;—it is the hero of the Westminster election, not the Coalition Minister that stands before us.

Mrs. Abington is charming as ever. Her archness, her quaint humour, her dainty sauciness are as apparent in Roxalana as in Miss Prue. She is no older in 1784 than she was in 1771. But we are half ashamed to linger even a moment here, when next to it in the catalogue stands "Mrs. Siddons as the Tragic Muse."

It in nowise detracts from the greatness of this portrait that the general idea was probably borrowed from Michelangelo's Isaiah in the Sistine Chapel: it only furnishes an example of the way in which Reynolds could borrow ideas, and yet make them thoroughly his own. He was determined to do justice to the great actress. "The picture kept him in a fever," says Northcote; the unfavourable reception his last year's pic-



P. 18

CHARLES JAMES FOX

tures had met with, made him resolved to show the critics that he was not in the "sere and yellow leaf" of art, while the grandeur and magnificence of the sitter spurred him on to fresh exertions. The picture is above criticism. Lawrence, Fuseli, Stothard, and Barry, artists of the most different tastes and styles, unite in considering it the finest female portrait ever painted. It was at once recognised as the greatest picture Reynolds had as yet produced, and it has never been surpassed. The great Queen of Tragedy sits in her stately chair brooding over deeds of horror and woe. Her noble head is resting on her hand. Behind her stand two awful figures, the one bearing a bowl, the other a dagger,—types of secret and open violence; and the whole atmosphere seems charged with a lurid light. But description is useless,—the picture must be seen. And this fortunately is easy enough, for it hangs in the charming little gallery at Dulwich College. Mrs. Siddons was justly proud of it, and would relate many an anecdote of her sittings: how when first she came to him, the painter had led her to the platform and said, "Ascend your undisputed throne: bestow on me some idea of the Tragic Muse!"—how Sir Joshua would have "tricked her out in all the colours of the rainbow," * had she not entreated to have more sombre drapery; how, when the portrait was finished, the gallant painter had insisted on inscribing his name on her robe, saying that he could not lose the honour that opportunity afforded him of going down to posterity on the hem of her garment. It would perhaps be truer to say that Mrs. Siddons goes down to posterity as the Tragic Muse of Reynolds, for we who have never heard a word or seen a gesture of hers, can from this picture gain a real idea of what the Queen of English Tragedy must have been. This great picture, together with the Garrick between Tragedy and Comedy, and the Mrs. Abington as the Comic Muse (painted

* "The mistake," says Mr. Leslie, "must have arisen from seeing the portrait in its early state; the dress laid in with the most brilliant tints, which Sir Joshua intended to glaze down to their present rich depth."

in 1787), illustrate the histrionic annals of the last century far better than volumes of criticisms and reminiscences.

To this exhibition Johnson goes, as well as to the Academy dinner. He has been failing of late, and is now an old man; but still his friends do not despair; if only he can get abroad—to Italy—all will be well. Reynolds and Boswell arrange the matter for him, but *Dis aliter visum*. And indeed the journey would have killed him. A visit to his native county is all that can be managed; in November he returned to the London he knew and loved so well, and on December 13, 1784, with a "God bless you" on his lips, he breathed his last.

"So passed the strong, heroic soul away."

On his death-bed he asked three things of Reynolds,—to forgive him thirty pounds which he had borrowed of him; to read the Bible; and never to use his pencil on Sundays. How characteristic of the man are these requests! "Sir Joshua," says Boswell, "readily acquiesced," or perhaps, as Hannah More would have us believe, he hesitated a while before promising to grant the third desire. Did he keep these promises? The debt was cancelled; let us hope the Bible was read; but (alas for weak human nature!) the pencil was not always laid aside on Sundays.

When Johnson's will came to be read, it appeared that he had appointed Reynolds one of his executors, and had left him as a legacy a copy of the last edition of the Dictionary. Of Reynolds' opinion of the Doctor I have already spoken, but Mr. Taylor has printed for the first time his "Character of Johnson," which sheds a great deal of light on the relations which existed between the two great men. One passage strikes me as particularly remarkable, though Sir Joshua's modesty would seem to have led him to attribute too much to Johnson's influence:—

"We are both" (he was writing probably to Boswell) "of Dr. Johnson's school. For my own part, I acknowledge the

MRS. SIDDONS AS THE TRAGIC MUSE (*in the Dulwich Gallery*). *p.* 80.

highest obligations to him. He may be said to have formed my mind, and to have brushed from it a great deal of rubbish. Those very people whom he has brought to think rightly, will occasionally criticise the opinions of their master when he nods. But we should always recollect that it is he himself who taught us, and enabled us to do it."

Johnson was succeeded in his Academy professorship by Bennet Langton, who, as we have noted, was one of the original members of the Club; but the vacant chair could never be filled. After Dr. Johnson's death, Reynolds had only Burke remaining of the great friends of his early manhood; while among his later acquaintances, Gibbon appears to have been the only one worthy the name of friend. Before quitting 1784 we must notice that it was in this year that Reynolds was appointed "Painter to His Majesty," in succession to Ramsay, who had died the year before.

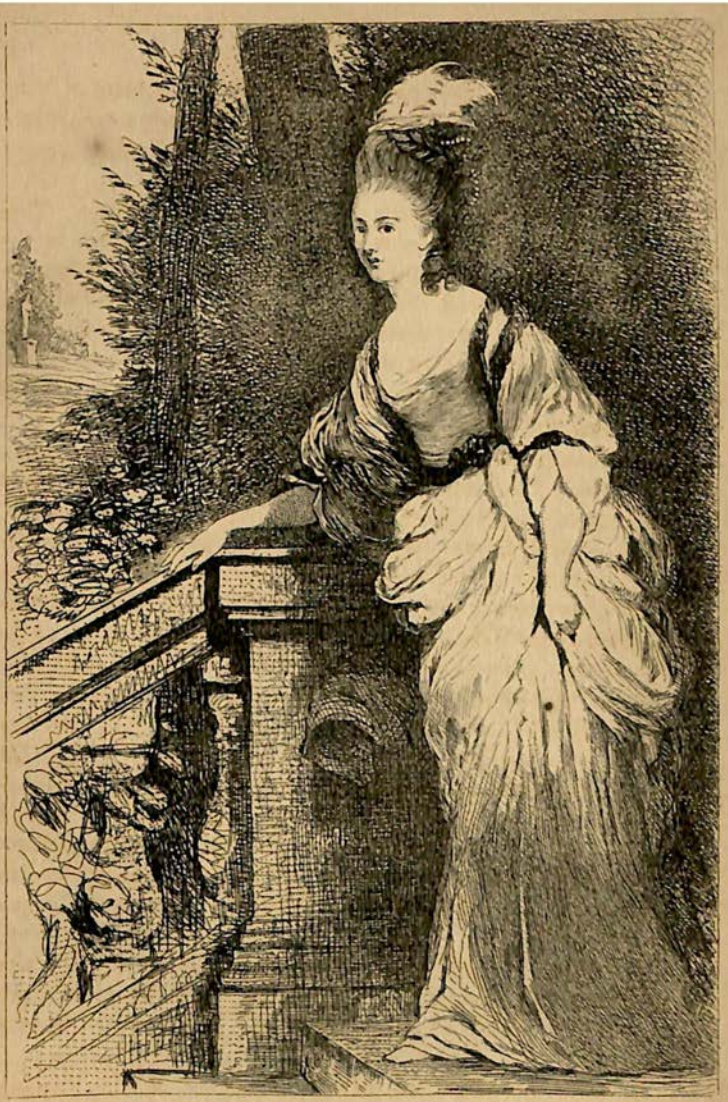
In 1785 Boswell was busy on his great work, and very anxious to be painted by Sir Joshua, but unfortunately the money was not forthcoming. But, sanguine as ever, he proposes that the portrait shall be paid for out of the first fees he receives as a barrister. Goodnatured Sir Joshua agrees to the conditions, and in 1785 commences his portrait of Bozzy. He was not a fine subject for a painter, but Reynolds' wondrous art lends a grace and charm which the original did not give outward proof of. Very different is another whom we find among the sitters for this year; for, awkward, vain, and dissipated though he was, Boswell was an honest man, while, even in these days of whitewashing, no historian has ventured to apologize for the infamous Duke of Orleans, the brutal and cowardly Philippe Egalité of the French Revolution—traitor alike to his king and his country. What disgust the pure-minded painter must have felt for this blustering prince, who came swaggering into his studio, boasting loudly of his great admiration for England and his friendship with the Prince of Wales! And how thoroughly Sir Joshua saw through the man! The portrait is that of a man endowed

with a not ignoble presence, but sunk in every species of vice, and lost to all feelings of shame and honour, ready to propitiate a mob by the sacrifice of his dearest friend or his most sacred obligation.

Another sitter differs both from Boswell and Orleans. This is Hunter, the great surgeon, and Professor of Anatomy to the Academy. His is a magnificent portrait: full justice is done to the noble, massive head, the strong individuality of the features, and the "intent" expression of the great anatomist. The attitude is that of a man of the highest intellect, absorbed in reflection; of one whose thoughts are far away,—not in the idle day-dream, but in the eager search after truth.

There is nothing important of Sir Joshua's in this year's exhibition. There are portraits of the Prince of Wales, Lord Northington, and Sir Hector Munroe; and one of Mrs. Masters, which, despite Horace Walpole's very unfavourable criticism, "flat, and one of his worst," is to my mind an extremely beautiful production—if indeed this be the one in which she is represented as Hebe. Nor can I think there will be many to endorse the virtuoso's opinion of the lovely "Duchess of Devonshire and her Daughter," which he characterises as "little like, and not good." Of the likeness we can hardly judge, but as regards the "goodness," the verdict of a modern writer that "it is a superb work, and that in motive, colour, and composition it ranks as a triumph alike of nature and art," will, I think, be the opinion of all who have seen this exquisite picture. This portrait Sir Joshua exhibited in 1786, together with twelve others, the most noticeable being the lifelike portraits of Joshua Sharpe the lawyer, and of Erskine, Lady Lucan's children, Lady Spencer, and her sister Miss Bingham, besides the portraits of Orleans and Hunter mentioned above. But the great work on which Sir Joshua was engaged this year was the Infant Hercules.

In 1780 Reynolds had painted a portrait of the Princess Daschkaw, a woman who played a most important part in



P. 32

THE DUCHESS OF DEVONSHIRE

the *revolution du palais* which resulted in the murder of the Emperor Peter by the orders of his wife, who at once seized the reins of government, and became as Catherine II. one of the greatest of Russian sovereigns. Whatever her crimes were, and even for these apologists have not been wanting, Catherine was a grand woman, and her name will always be honoured in Russia. Her policy was in great measure a continuation of that of Peter the Great, and she aimed at civilising her country by the introduction of western arts. Under her, literature flourished, and now she was to come before the world as the patroness of the great English painter. Russian art at this time consisted of little more than the production of icons, or pictures of saints, in which originality was downright heresy, while portrait-painting was unknown at that period. Catherine had probably seen and admired Reynolds' portrait of her friend, and accordingly, through her ambassador in England, signified her desire that the painter would execute an historical picture for her,—the subject to be left entirely to him. Never has a greater compliment been paid to an English painter. Reynolds appreciated it, and determined to send to St. Petersburg a masterpiece of his art. The first subject which suggested itself to him was Queen Elizabeth reviewing her troops at Tilbury, but on second thoughts it must have struck him that there was little in common between the two sovereigns, and that the incident proposed to be depicted was of national rather than universal interest.

It was a most happy inspiration which led him to fix upon the Infant Hercules as the subject for his Russian picture. The Empire, then as now, had its two foes—despotism and ignorance —who must be crushed if it is to exist among the states of the civilised world. It is a struggle for existence in its best aspect—an heroic struggle in which there is a consciousness of victory, but a victory not to be gained without a resolute and strenuous effort—that Reynolds depicts in his magnificent figure which forms the centre of the picture. The Hercules is divine, and

majestic in his terrible strength, but he is an infant nevertheless. "It teems with man," says Fuseli, "but without the sacrifice of puerility." The other figures of the group are hardly so successful, though there is something exceedingly noble in the figure of the blind seer, Teiresias—for whom Johnson was the model—as with uplifted hands he "prophesies concerning the child." The figures of Alcmene, and of Juno, who "hangs over the scene like a black pestilence," are singularly unsuccessful, the latter being at once poor and incongruous, with but little of the "Mene incepto desistere victam?" about her, and far less of the "ox-eyed Hera."

But with such a magnificent central figure to gaze upon, the eye is hardly likely to wander to the motley mob that surrounds it. This great picture was most carefully elaborated by Sir Joshua: Crabbe tells us that when he visited the studio while the Hercules was being painted, Reynolds informed him that he was then engaged on his fourth attempt; and when in 1788—after having been exhibited—it was leaving England, the painter said, "There are ten pictures under it,—some better, some worse."

In 1786 he was painting the lovely group of angels—five likenesses of one child, Miss Gordon—which was exhibited in the next year. Besides this, there were portraits of Boswell, the Prince of Wales, Sir H. Englefield, and others, including a charming one of "Master Yorke teaching his Dog to beg," admirable alike for the figure and the beautiful landscape in which it is set. Groups of Lady St. Asaph and Lady Smyth with their children were also sent to this year's exhibition; and in all there were thirteen pictures to represent the President. In 1787 Boydell, the great print-publisher of the day, hit upon a plan by which the public taste for Shakspeare as well as for Art should be gratified. A grand edition of the poet's works was to be produced, illustrated by all the great artists of the age, and edited by Steevens. Romney, West, and Copley agreed to take part in the scheme, but Reynolds hung back for a long while.

AGE OF INNOCENCE

It may be that he thought "book-illustration" beneath him, but more probably he did not particularly care to be associated in a work the greater part of which would necessarily be executed by men of very inferior talent. However this may be, he gave in at length to Boydell's earnest solicitations, and consented to paint three pictures—"Puck," "The Witch Scene in Macbeth," and "The Death of Cardinal Beaufort." Of these, the first is far the best, though it scarcely represents the mischievous little elf of the *Midsummer Night's Dream* any more than the negro in the portrait of Mrs. Tollemache as Miranda can be accepted as the Caliban of Shakspeare. Still Puck is a charming little fellow, and Alderman Boydell deserves our gratitude for having suggested the idea to Sir Joshua. Very little can be said for the Macbeth. The composition and grouping are alike unsuccessful, and the witches are not the witches of Shakspeare,—the "secret, black, and midnight hags, so withered, and so wild in their attire." The other picture is far finer: it is the Beaufort of the dramatist, not of history, which is depicted, and whose awful death-bed we are introduced to in this picture. The terrified visage of the dying Cardinal as he lies "blaspheming God, and cursing men on earth," and the "busy meddling fiend" who sits upon his pillow and "lays strong siege unto the witch's soul," are worthy of the painter and poet. But here, as in the Hercules, the surroundings are very inferior to the grandeur of the central figure, and the composition is by no means good.

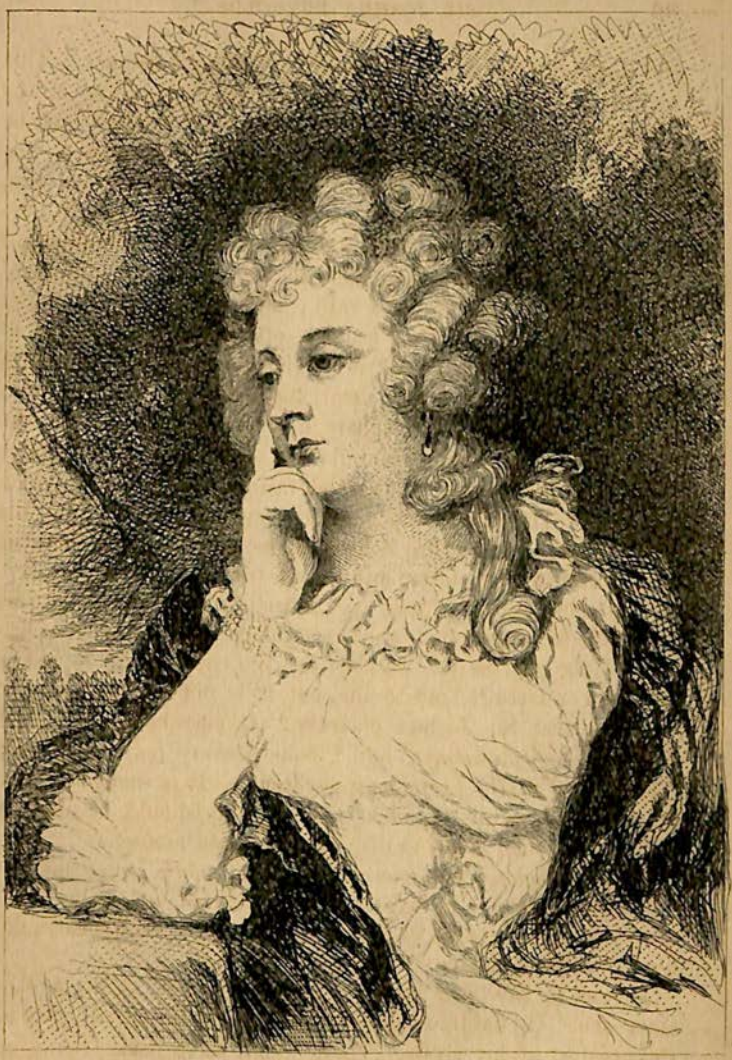
The exhibition of 1788 showed that there was no falling-off in his powers. The Hercules naturally formed the chief attraction, but there were to be seen, besides this great picture, no less than sixteen others from the President's brush. The most important portrait was one of Lord Heathfield, the heroic defender of Gibraltar, who was *par excellence* the lion of the day. Reynolds was particularly adapted to represent the great general, for he had himself passed some days at Gibraltar on his way to Italy, and could fully appreciate the importance of

the Rock, and the bravery and skill of Elliot's defence. This picture, which is now in the National Gallery, is one of the finest of Reynolds' portraits. Almost all my readers must be familiar with it, and there are few who will not endorse the high praise Mrs. Jameson bestows upon it. "It is," she says, "in all respects one of the finest and most characteristic portraits Sir Joshua ever painted. The head is full of animation; the figure finely drawn, especially the left hand, which is foreshortened with consummate skill; and the whole is painted with the greatest possible breadth of manner and vigour of colouring. The background is sublimely conceived, and serves to throw out the figure with surprising force of effect. Volumes of smoke obscure the atmosphere, and we almost hear the roar of artillery: a cannon behind him, pointed perpendicularly downwards, shows the immense elevation of the spot on which he stands. This circumstance, and the keys grasped firmly in his hand, give to the picture something beyond mere portraiture; almost an historic interest and significance."

The other picture of note is "Muscipula," well known to us just now from Mr. Cousins' beautiful engraving. The eagerness of the girl, as she watches lest the captive should escape her, is wonderfully true to life, but it is not the best side of girlhood that Sir Joshua portrays. It may be we have got over-sensitive nowadays, but I believe every one will prefer "Robinetta" to the pretty mouse-catcher. It is somehow more in accordance with our ideas that a child should be tending her pet bird than gloating over an entrapped mouse.

To 1788 belong two pictures of great merit, some idea of which my readers may gather from the accompanying illustrations—the portraits of lovely Mrs. Bradyll, and charming, quaint little Penelope Boothby.

It was in this year that Gainsborough died, at the age of sixty-one. He hardly comes into Reynolds' life at all, save as the greatest of his rivals. There might have been friendship between the two great painters, and certainly Reynolds did



P. 86

MRS BRADYLL.

what he could to promote it. But their tastes, pursuits, and modes of life were entirely different, and it was only as artists that they had anything in common. Considering how little intercourse there had been between them, and how quickly the brief friendship of 1782 had terminated, one is pleased to find that on his death-bed Gainsborough wrote to Sir Joshua desiring that he might see him once more before he died. To this interview Reynolds alluded in his Discourse on Gainsborough which he delivered before the Academy at the end of this year. "The impression on my mind," he says, "was, that his regret at losing life was principally the regret of leaving his art; and more especially as he now began, he said, to see what his deficiencies were; which he said he flattered himself, in his last works, were in some measure supplied." From another source we learn that the dying painter had a large number of his unfinished pictures brought to his bedside, and explained to Reynolds how he had intended to finish them. Gainsborough's funeral was attended by nearly all the Academicians, and the President acted as one of the pall-bearers. Little could Reynolds have thought, as he stood beside his rival's grave in Kew churchyard, that he himself was so soon to be lost to art,—but so it was.

In 1789 Sir Joshua was at the height of his fame. There are no signs of declining years in his pictures, no symptoms to tell that the hand had grown unsteady or the eye dim. The great master was as fresh as ever, able to enjoy the society of Sheridan and Burke, and to chat affably with Mrs. Jordan and Mrs. Billington; able, moreover, to paint such pictures as "Simplicity" and "Robin Goodfellow," and the portraits of Sheridan and Lord Henry Fitzgerald. The first of these, the lovely picture of little Offy Gwatkin, his great-niece, is the most charming of all Reynolds' child pictures. The name "Simplicity," which was given it, exactly expresses its character. There is none of that roguishness, that playful archness, which we find in so many of his portraits of children; but it is

none the less attractive for that. It is the ideal of happy, guileless babyhood, the personification of the "simple child that lightly draws its breath." Yet there is nothing insipid in the little maiden; she is just an honest, frank, good little girl, "who fears no evil, for she knows no ill." It is an idyl in itself. The landscape in which the figure is set, the simple wild flowers she holds so carelessly, are thoroughly in harmony. It lacks nothing of the charm of the greatest of all the painters of children; and the age which could admire such a picture, could not have been after all so utterly depraved as we have been taught to believe.

All the mischievousness of "Simplicity" has been carried off by "Robin Goodfellow," who looks the impersonation of frolic and roguishness as he sits on his mushroom, resting for a moment, it would seem, from the fatigues of some practical joke, and pondering in his mind who shall be the next victim of his *diablerie*.

The portrait of Sheridan is a very characteristic one. The young orator had made himself a great name in the Hastings trial, which was still dragging its slow length along, and everything might be expected from this eloquent and witty young Irishman. But he lacked that 'stay' and those larger views which are necessary to the statesman. To bring forward a grievance, to attack a policy, to destroy a feeble adversary's arguments, there was no one like Sheridan; add to which, liveliness, geniality, and goodnature, and we get the man as Reynolds painted him. A striking face truly, but without that power which makes one at once recognise in Burke a leader of men. The portrait gained the highest praise from the veteran Horace Walpole, who was as assiduous as ever in his attendance at the Academy Exhibition. "Praise," he writes in his catalogue against this picture, "cannot overstate the merits of this portrait. It is not canvas and colour, it is animated nature. All the unaffected manner and character of the great original."

'88

SIMPLICITY

The more ambitious pictures, are, as usual, the least effective. The Cymon and Iphigenia would appear to have been the most successful, while the very title of the other one, "The Continence of Scipio"—quite the most hackneyed of all subjects—is sufficient; and we can bear with equanimity the knowledge that it now hangs in the Imperial Gallery at St. Petersburg. Mr. Waagen, comparing it with the Hercules, says, "The Continence of Scipio is incomparably less happy: the composition is too crowded; the Scipio not weighty enough; the bride, seen in profile, nothing but a pretty, somewhat shamefaced English miss; the head of Allucius is lifeless and mask-like. The colouring, moreover, is untrue, the execution unequal, and in various parts too slight."

I have quoted this criticism on account of its severity, for it is, I believe, the harshest criticism ever applied to any of Sir Joshua's productions; and when we remember the immense number of pictures he painted, it is marvellous how very few—they could be counted on one's fingers—can be entirely condemned. No doubt there is hardly a picture of Sir Joshua's in which, if you are so minded, you cannot pick holes. In one the colouring is patchy, in another the drawing is atrocious, in another the perspective is at fault, and in a fourth the composition is ungraceful. But the critic who is more than a mere fault-finder, involuntarily stops in the midst of his animadversions, for the charm of the great master is upon him: he forgets the imperfections he was going to point out, the shortcomings he was about to dilate upon; and, laying aside cursing, blesses him altogether. The pocket-book for this year contains the ordinary number of sitters—the Prince of Wales among them; but on Monday, July 13th, occurs this entry, "10½ for Miss ——," opposite to which is written, "Prevented by my eye beginning to be obscured." It was on this day that the great painter "laid down his pencil, and never lifted it more;" in ten weeks' time he had entirely lost the sight of one eye. Over-work, as Mr. Leslie says, was in all probability the

cause of this blindness, which, like Milton's, was occasioned by *gutta serena.*

"So thick a drop serene hath quencht their orbs."

To a painter, what trial could be greater than blindness? To one who revelled in the visual delights and the enjoyment of the beautiful, what grief so great as to be cut off at a blow from all powers of sight? Never more to gaze on his own lovely productions, never more to handle the wonted pencil! It might seem that his remaining years would be dragged out wearily—a mere death in life; and so, no doubt, it would have been with Gainsborough, had blindness overtaken him; but Reynolds, though yielding to no painter in his intense love for art, had other pleasures, other delights. He could still attend the Club, and join in converse with such men as Burke and Gibbon: the Academy would not lose him altogether; he could in his Discourses still inculcate the true principles of art; the literary *salons*, the assemblies of the great, were still open to him. His life was not a dreary one. His equable temper, which had kept him from undue exultation, was now to preserve him from despondency; his kindly disposition, which had ever been ready to sympathise with the sufferings of others, now ensured him, in turn, sympathy and attention.

And his affliction did not come upon him all at once: the progress of his malady was gradual, and it would seem that he never became totally blind, although very soon after his first attack he found that it was impossible for him to read the paper without considerable trouble and pain. His niece, Miss Palmer, devoted herself to him, accompanied him in his visits to Beaconsfield and Brighton, and put up with a stay of two months at the Richmond Villa, which she tells us she hated, "for one has all the inconveniences of town and country put together, and not one of the comforts."

Sir Joshua's great picture had reached Russia safely, and together with it he had ventured to send to the Empress a copy

of his Discourses, which Catherine gracefully acknowledged in a letter (dated March 5th, 1790) to Count Woronzow, the Russian ambassador. She declares that she perused the Discourses "with avidity," and that in them, as well as in the picture, she could "easily trace an elevated genius." As a proof of her appreciation of the painter, she presented him with a snuffbox having her own portrait in bas relief on the cover.

For the "Infant Hercules" the Empress paid, though not very promptly, the sum of fifteen hundred guineas.

But the same year in which so pleasing a testimony was given to the value of his Academy Lectures, saw a most unfortunate disagreement between Sir Joshua and the Society of which he had been the President and the chief ornament for more than five-and-twenty years.

As in all personal quarrels, it is always most difficult to apportion the blame in this most unpleasant affair. That the President's usual suavity and slowness to take offence somewhat deserted him on this occasion must be admitted; but, on the other hand, the conduct of the majority of the Academicians was extremely discourteous, and altogether wanting in that deference which one would have expected to have been shown to the man to whom more than to any one else they owed the high position to which their art had been raised. Indeed, it would appear that they presumed on their President's good-nature and mild disposition, and were considerably astonished when they discovered the effect their conduct had had.

The facts of the quarrel, as far as they can be unravelled from the contradictory statements we have, are briefly these. After the death of Wall, the Professorship of Perspective remained vacant for a considerable time. Sir Joshua considered it his duty to take whatever measures seemed best to him to fill up the chair. But it was impossible to find, either among the Academicians or the Associates, any one able and willing to undertake the work. This state of things went on for some while, till, in 1788, Edwards, an Associate, offered to give a

series of lectures on Perspective, probably with a view to the vacant chair. The success of these lectures clearly indicated that they supplied a want; indeed, the idea of an academy professing to teach painting without providing instruction in the art of perspective is ludicrous. The President, for some reason or other, seems to have been dissatisfied with Edwards,—at all events, he did nothing to further his candidature for the Professorship. On the contrary, he had a *protégé* of his own to bring forward. This was the Italian Bonomi, whose knowledge of perspective was unrivalled; but then he was not an Academician, or even an Associate, and it had been decided that the Professor should be chosen from among the R.A.s. Such being the case, Sir Joshua was determined to obtain Bonomi's election to the Associateship, and accordingly he proposed that the next Associate should be chosen with special reference to his eventually filling the Professorship of Perspective, and at the same time it was suggested that candidates for the post should send in specimens of their skill in perspective drawing. In this Bonomi acquiesced, and sent a drawing of Lord Lansdowne's library, which appears to have been excellent. Edwards, on the other hand, turned sulky, and wrote that "if specimens were required, he was past a boy, and should produce none." Shortly afterwards an election for Associate was required, when Reynolds advocated Bonomi's claims most warmly; but the result was hardly what he expected, as it appeared that Bonomi and Gilpin had received an equal number of votes. Sir Joshua naturally gave his casting vote in favour of his own candidate, and Bonomi was thus placed on an equality with Edwards. But symptoms of revolt very soon began to show themselves in the Academy: against the President and his *protégé* were brought the two gravest charges that Englishmen ever bring against those with whom they differ,—Reynolds was accused of favouritism, Bonomi was branded as a "foreigner."

The result of this absurd jealousy was quickly seen. A vacancy occurred amongst the Academicians: the time was

T. 92

LADY POWIS

now come when they would show the public that they were not going to be ridden roughshod over by their President. An opposition candidate must be started to the foreign favourite, and fortunately in Fuseli they found one whose genius and merits could not be denied, and whose claims on general grounds far surpassed those of Bonomi. But Sir Joshua's argument was not invalidated. He still held that the first thing to be done was to fill up the vacant Professorship, and that the election ought to turn on the question who knew most of the art of Perspective, and who could teach it best. "The students," he said, "are our children, and it is our duty to provide for them the best of masters, ... to make the Academy itself whole and complete before we think of its ornaments." There is much to be said for this view, but the Academicians might fairly urge that to reject Fuseli for Bonomi was impossible, and that Edwards or some one else might continue to give lectures on Perspective without occupying the chair. There was nothing in this difference of opinion to lead necessarily to a rupture, but somehow or other a great deal of ill-feeling seems to have been engendered, and on the occasion of the election the President was certainly treated with unpardonable discourtesy, while the result of the ballot, which showed that Bonomi had obtained only eight votes against twenty given to Fuseli, must have still further irritated Sir Joshua. The cavalier manner in which his wishes had been disregarded by the majority of the Academicians, and the positive rudeness he had met with at the hands of some of them, who interrupted his attempts to explain and justify his conduct, and responded to his request that they would examine Bonomi's productions by ordering them to be removed from the room,—all seemed to Sir Joshua to form part of a preconcerted scheme to drive him from the Presidential chair. In all probability this was not the case. Some of the Academicians may possibly have been envious of Reynolds' fame, but the motive with most of them would

seem to have been rather a jealousy of what they deemed an infringement on their rights—an attempt to convert the oligarchical form of government which the original constitution of the Academy had established, into a despotism.

However this may have been, there was only one course open to the President—to resign, which he did forthwith. This led to a strong protest from the minority who had supported Bonomi, including Barry, Northcote, Opie, Nollekens, and Zoffany; and eventually the breach was healed by the Academicians passing a resolution half-apologising for their conduct, alleging that it arose from a mistake, and requesting Sir Joshua to withdraw his resignation. This he did most readily, reflection having no doubt shown him that no insult was intended, and no "conspiracy" had been formed against him, that there had been faults on both sides, and the best thing to do was to forgive and forget.

So ends the single unpleasant episode in this gentle life. He was as assiduous as ever in his attendance at the Academy, where in December 1790 he delivered his fifteenth and last Discourse. To the exhibition he contributed six pictures, including a portrait of himself, and one of Mrs. Billington the actress. There was nothing of surpassing merit in any of these pictures, but they clearly proved that the painter's skill was as great as ever, and that English art had lost no dotard who "lagged superfluous on the stage," but a man in the full enjoyment of his powers, and who might, had his eyesight been spared, have outshone his previous achievements. As it was, all that he could do now was to occasionally clean one of his pictures, and perhaps even add here and there some little touch which was needed to give it perfection.

His friends still remained true to him, and he is welcomed at Beaconsfield, at Woburn, and at Ampthill. To Ampthill he received a most pressing invitation from the Countess of Ossory, her letter being accompanied by a waistcoat which she had herself worked for the painter. Sir Joshua's letter of

acknowledgment shows how little his spirits had been affected by his malady, and is moreover so charming a specimen of his epistolary style, that I subjoin it *in extenso* :—

Madam,—I am just setting out for Beaconsfield, with an intention to stay there all next week, which, I am sorry to say, will prevent me from waiting on your Ladyship at Ampthill—I should have said, throwing myself at your Ladyship's feet, and expressing my thanks and acknowledgments for the honour conferred on me by this new mark of favour. I really think, as it is the work of your Ladyship's own hand, it is too good to wear. I believe I had better put it up with the letter which accompanied it, and show it occasionally, as I do the Empress of Russia's box, and letter of her own handwriting. I will promise this at least that when I do wear it, I will not take a pinch of snuff that day—I mean, after I have it on.

Such a rough beast with such a delicate waistcoat! I am sorry to say I am forced to end abruptly, as the coach is waiting. Miss Palmer desires her most respectful compliments, and I beg mine to Lord Ossory and the ladies.

I am, with greatest respect,
Your Ladyship's, &c., &c.,
J. REYNOLDS.

Sir Joshua was busy this year (1791) raising funds for Johnson's monument in St. Paul's. It had been decided to erect a colossal statue at the cost of £1200, of which, as Reynolds tells Malone in April, only £900 had been collected, but to prevent the scheme falling through he had guaranteed the remainder. He had hoped that the Academy would recognise the honour which Johnson had conferred upon them in accepting the honorary post of Professor of Ancient Literature to that institution, by subscribing handsomely to the memorial; and after some discussion a hundred guineas was unanimously voted, but the King vetoed the subscription, probably thinking it a bad precedent, and one likely to lead the way to reckless grants of the funds of the Academy. So the affair dragged on, and it was not till many years after, when Reynolds was lying at rest by Johnson's side, that the statue of the great author was erected.

To show that his quarrel with the Academy had been made up,

Sir Joshua offered his collection of paintings to them for a very small sum, on condition that a special gallery should be built to contain them. This generous offer was foolishly refused, whereupon Reynolds determined to exhibit the pictures, which consisted of many "old masters," as well as a large number of his own productions. His object in so doing was partly to secure purchasers for them, and partly to provide a sum of money for his faithful old servant, Ralph Kirkley. From this latter circumstance, it received the name of "Ralph's Exhibition," which gave a handle to the wits for many a jest and lampoon—the neatest witticism being an application of a couplet from Hudibras:

> "A squire he had whose name was Ralph,
> Who in the adventure went his half."

Almost all the states of Europe had recognised Reynolds' position as the reviver of art in England, and had honoured him in different ways. In France, Holland, and Flanders he had been welcomed enthusiastically; to Florence he had sent his portrait on being elected an honorary member of that famous Academy; Catherine of Russia had extolled his powers as a painter and a teacher; and now the Academy of Sweden sent an earnest request that the great English artist would allow his portrait to be painted by a young Swede then resident in London, and hung in the Academy's rooms at Stockholm.

When this picture was being painted, in May, Sir Joshua, despite his blindness, was a hale, vigorous man, for whom one might have thought eight or ten more years of life might be predicted. Even in September Malone tells us that "he was in such health and spirits that during our return to town from Mr. Burke's seat near Beaconsfield, we left his carriage at the inn at Hayes, and walked five miles on the road, in a warm day, without his complaining of any fatigue. He had at that time, though above sixty-eight years of age, the appearance of a man not much beyond fifty, and seemed as likely to live for ten or fifteen years as any of his younger friends."

But appearances were deceptive, and in reality the end was near at hand. In October he began to feel great pain in his eyes, and became almost totally blind, and in consequence extremely dejected. He was compelled to give up attending the Academy, and in November wrote resigning the Presidency. But the Academicians would not hear of it,—he must continue President even though his infirmities might prevent his discharging his duties. West (who succeeded him) was appointed Deputy, and Sir Joshua retained to the last moment of his life the high office he had so greatly adorned.

During December and January it was evident to his friends that the painter was gradually sinking. Each successive visit they paid him found him weaker and more despondent. Still the doctors insisted that there was nothing serious .the matter with him—that his fears arose from nervousness consequent on his loss of sight; but no danger was to be apprehended. But they were entirely at fault: he was in reality suffering all the while from a severe form of liver complaint, which was gradually wearing him out; and the pain they declared to be imaginary, was unfortunately too real. For a considerable while his strong constitution, unimpaired by excesses, enabled him to battle against the malady, but every day it gained upon him, till at length he perceived that his illness could have but one termination, and all he could pray for was cessation of pain. In January he was compelled to take to his bed, where he tranquilly resigned himself to his approaching end, and on February 23rd, 1792, he peacefully breathed his last.

The news of his death was received with the utmost grief at the Club and the Academy, while there could hardly have been one of his sitters who did not feel that he had lost a personal friend. Every one was determined that the great man should be honoured in his death. He was buried in St. Paul's, close beside the greatest of English architects, Christopher Wren; and the town "had seldom seen a costlier funeral." The body lay in state in the model-room of the Academy, and on

February 29th the procession set out from Somerset House. Among the pall-bearers were to be seen the Lord High Steward (the Duke of Dorset), the Dukes of Leeds and Portland, the Earl of Ossory, and Lord Eliot, while the mourners included all the members of the Royal Academy, the Archbishop of York, Sir C. Bunbury, Hunter, Burke, Malone, Windham, Boswell, and Langton. "Never," writes Burke, "was a funeral of ceremony attended with so much sincere concern of all sorts of people. The day was favourable; the order not broken or interrupted in the smallest degree. . . . . Everything, I think, was just as our deceased friend would, if living, have wished it to be, for he was, as you know, not altogether indifferent to these kind of observances."

The will had been written by himself shortly before his death, and by this he left the whole of his property, after certain legacies had been paid, to his niece, Miss Palmer, who subsequently became Marchioness of Thomond. It has been calculated that she must have inherited at least £100,000, an immense fortune for those days, and indeed at any time a very large sum for an artist to be able to bequeath. The executors were Burke, Malone, and Metcalfe.

So ends the life of Joshua Reynolds, and never was a happier life lived. "Everything," as Burke remarked, "turned out fortunately for him, from the moment of his birth to the hour of his death." In his profession, for which he had a genuine love, he rose to the highest place; he was fond of society, and he could number among his friends the greatest and the wisest of his contemporaries. "The whips and scorns of time," "the insolence of office," were not for him; but thoroughly prosperous as he was, he never forgot his old friends, never refused to assist less fortunate men. He was not an ascetic or a devotee, but a thoroughly moral and religious man; and it is marvellous that, in those days of reckless abuse and coarse invective, not one word was breathed against his fair fame. Of his unruffled temper, goodnature, and affability I have

already spoken, and I will conclude this brief and imperfect sketch of this great man with the eulogium Burke pronounced upon him immediately after his death: "In full affluence of foreign and domestic fame, admired by the expert in art, and by the learned in science, courted by the great, caressed by sovereign powers, and celebrated by distinguished poets, his native humility, modesty, and candour never forsook him, even on surprise or provocation; nor was the least degree of arrogance or assumption visible to the most scrutinizing eye in any part of his conduct or discourse. His talents of every kind, powerful from nature, and not meanly cultivated by letters, his social virtues in all the relations and all the habitudes of life, rendered him the centre of a very great and unparalleled variety of agreeable societies, which will be dissipated by his death. He had too much merit not to excite some jealousy, too much innocence to provoke any enmity. The loss of no man of his time can be felt with more sincere, general, and unmixed sorrow."

CHAPTER VII.

LITERARY WORKS.

IN this chapter I propose very rapidly to survey Sir Joshua's literary works, to consider his claims to a place among our great writers, and to exhibit the principles which he inculcated.

A word as to his style. There is a clearness and perspicuity about it which enables us at once to perceive the drift of his remarks; he does not conceal himself in a dense mass of verbiage, nor does he write ambiguously, hinting at this and suggesting that, but arrow-like goes straight to his point. Withal, there is no baldness; every sentence is carefully constructed, and there are everywhere marks of the *labor limæ;* perhaps here and there it savours somewhat too much of elaboration. Still, it is a very graceful style; just what we should expect from a cultured, well-tempered mind,—scholarly without pedantry, easy without vulgarity. He is of course tainted somewhat with the classical heresy, and often uses a trisyllable where we should prefer a monosyllable, or a word of Latin origin in preference to one of native English growth. But for a man who had lived so much in Johnson's society, he is no great sinner in this respect; and all is so natural and so unaffected, that we are certain it was done, not out of a desire to parade his learning, but simply because it was the ordinary style of the time.

His matter is as pleasant as his manner. No trace of that lofty superiority, that assumption of infallibility, which the critic generally thinks it necessary to put on, is to be found in Reynolds. His own views he puts forward as being in his opinion the right ones, not as the *only* ones it is possible to hold. He is severe on pretenders, on sham connoisseurs, but the severity is always tempered with a playful banter or a half-excuse. And his opinions are those of a sensible, unprejudiced man: he has his favourites among the old masters, but he respects every great name. Fault-finding is not his *forte*, and often we find him touching lightly on errors and defects, only to pause over the excellences of the artist he is criticising. His advice to students is, I should conceive, most valuable and practical; but of this I have really no means of judging. It seems, however, to me, that having rescued English Art from the degradation in which he found it, his great object in his Discourses was to prevent its ever sinking to that state again.

"Reynolds' Discourses" has always been a favourite book. It has passed through innumerable editions, and appeared in every imaginable form. But his three papers in the *Idler* have been somewhat overlooked, yet in the whole of that admirable collection of essays, few are to be found more charming than those which the painter contributed. They are Nos. 76, 79, and 82, and appeared respectively on September 29, October 20, and November 10, 1759. The date is worth noticing, for it shows that they were written at a time when artistic criticism was in its infancy. A visit to Italy, and a gallery of 'old masters,' most of them copies, and too often copies of worthless originals, was sufficient to set a man up as a 'connoisseur.' This charlatanry it is that Reynolds exposed and ridiculed. He illustrates his remarks by an account of an imaginary visit paid to Hampton Court in the company of a 'man of taste,' whose cue it was to be for ever lamenting that Van Dyck had not 'the flowing line,' that Raphael lacked 'harmony,' and so on. He had, in fact, learnt by rote the names of the great masters, with

a suitable epithet appended to each name, but here his knowledge stopped. He could rattle on about the 'purity' of Domenicheno, the 'learning' of Poussin, the 'art' of Guido, and the 'sublimity' of Michelangelo, but to suggest that Guido had purity, or attribute learning to Michelangelo, was rank heresy in the eyes of the connoisseur.

The second *Idler* exposes the errors of the realistic school, and is not altogether without its moral in the present day. Reynolds combats most successfully the notion that all a painter has to do is to imitate Nature, and shows that Art bears the same relation to Nature that Poetry does to Narration. Art is in fact the idealisation of Nature. The labour of the realistic painter is "merely mechanical, in which the slowest intellect is always sure to succeed best." Art does not consist in painting a cat or a fiddle so finely, that, as the phrase is, 'It looks as if you could take it up,' but in giving a grace and sublimity to the most commonplace object. It is the grandeur of the Italian school, not the literalness of the Dutch, which is to be imitated.

No. 82 is on "The True Idea of Beauty," and is a contribution to a controversy as old as any in metaphysics, but which had come just then into special prominence—Whence do we get our ideas of beauty? It is a question for metaphysicians to argue over in ponderous tomes, but it is also a question, and a very practical one, for painters. Reynolds arrives at the conclusion—probably the true one—that habit and association are everything. The negro sees in thick lips, woolly locks, and a coal-black complexion, the ideal of loveliness. Each animal admires its own species. So there is hardly such a thing as abstract beauty, nor can it be said that one species is more beautiful than another. The question of individuals is different; and here Reynolds adopts the theory that we consider that excellent which is most common; a straight nose is more often seen than a crooked one, therefore the one is a beauty, the other a defect; a squint is a rarity, and so it is considered a

deformity. There is, he contends, "a central form which Nature most frequently produces, and always seems to intend in her productions," and therefore a painter should attend to "the invariable and general ideas of Nature," and not regard "minute particularities and accidental discriminations," if he would produce beauty, and not "pollute his canvas with deformity."

The Discourses are fifteen in number, and were delivered before the Academy at intervals from 1769 to 1790. The circumstances of the case prevented his giving a systematic course of introduction, "but," as a writer in the *Quarterly Review* adds, "more methodical lecturers have not had equal success in placing the student upon the vantage-ground occupied by the master. He expatiated upon the qualities which go to form a fine picture; he described the various schools of painting, with the merits and defects of each; he specified the characteristics of the several masters, showing what was to be imitated and what to be avoided; and he detailed to learners the modes of proceeding which would best enable them to appropriate the beauties of their forerunners."

Space forbids my attempting anything like an analysis of these Discourses, and I must refer my readers to the admirable abstracts of them in Messrs. Leslie and Taylor's work, or, better still, to the originals themselves, which, as old reviewers were wont to say, "will amply repay perusal." Still I cannot forbear touching on some of the topics Sir Joshua expatiates upon, as without a knowledge of his principles of Art it is impossible to judge fairly one of his paintings.

The first Discourse is extremely interesting as being concerned principally with the advantages of the establishment of an Academy of the Fine Arts, and with laying down rules for the guidance of students. The Academy will be a repository for the great examples of art. "There the student receives, at one glance, the principles which many artists have spent their whole lives in ascertaining." There will be an "atmosphere of floating knowledge in this seminary, where every

mind may imbibe somewhat congenial to its own conceptions." Emulation will be excited, ideas will be interchanged, and a student will often learn more from his companions than from his masters. "One advantage," he adds with just pride, "we shall have in our Academy, which no other nation can boast: we shall have nothing to unlearn."

Proceeding next to methods of instruction and study, he lays down as a general principle that the great thing to be exacted from the young students is "implicit obedience to the rules of Art as established by the practice of the great masters; that those models, which have passed through the approbation of ages, should be considered by them as perfect and infallible guides; as subjects for their imitation, not their criticism." The boy who has exclaimed "*Ed io anche sono pittore*," and forthwith expects the world to recognize in him a second Raphael, is to learn in the Academy how slight his knowledge is, how small his powers. He has first of all to acquire the rudiments of Art; then, and not till then, may he criticise or select any particular style and make it his own. Precociousness, above all things, is to be discouraged, and the uselessness of talent without industry should be demonstrated. Patience and perseverance—two very homely virtues—are what the great painter insists upon, and his whole life is a commentary on the text. If these maxims are attended to, England will never lack great painters; the present age may "then," he hopes, "vie in arts with that of Leo the Tenth, and the dignity of the dying art may be revived under the reign of George the Third."

In the second Discourse he continues the same subject, and proceeds to divide the study of painting into three periods. The first is that of acquiring the rudiments, the grammar of Art; after which comes the second period, "in which his business is to learn all that has been known and done before his own time. Having hitherto received instructions from a particular master, he is now to consider the Art itself as his

master." He is still, however, under subjection and discipline, and it is not till he has arrived at the final stage that he is emancipated from "subjection to any authority but what he shall himself judge to be supported by reason." Now he "no longer compares the performances of Art with each other, but examines the Art itself by the standard of Nature." Then, his mind having been properly disciplined, he may indulge in enthusiasm; then at length he may dare to be original.

Such is the advice Sir Joshua gave to the first students of the Royal Academy, and it is just the counsel a wise teacher should give his pupils. Enthusiasm, invention, originality, have to be restrained, but not crushed. Nothing can be done without a knowledge of rules and a study of models, but such knowledge and such study as not to crush individuality and damp the fire of genius.

In his third Discourse, Reynolds enumerated "the great leading principles of the Grand Style," and distinguished "the genuine habits of Nature from those of Fashion." The Grand Style is touched upon again in the next Discourse, in which he also describes the Composite style. There is a curious passage in this lecture which might be only too well illustrated from Sir Joshua's own pictures. "A portrait painter," he says, "when he attempts history, unless he is upon his guard, is likely to enter too much into the detail. He too frequently makes his historical heads look like portraits. . . . . A history-painter paints men in general; a portrait painter, a particular man, and consequently a defective model." He might have added, "Video meliora proboque, deteriora sequor."

The fifth Discourse treats of a subject which he had already touched upon—the difficulty of expressing a mixed passion, and of combining different excellences. In the second *Idler*, he had shown the impossibility of blending the Italian and the Dutch styles; and in this Discourse he goes still further, and demonstrates the arduousness of attempting to unite all the excellences of Art.

The sixth Discourse is very important, for its subject is Imitation, and it is a magnificent defence of the true method of imitating, by a man who was not ashamed to borrow ideas from every source, whether Michelangelo or Jacob Cats, and who had been satirised and abused for this very thing. "There is nothing new under the sun," is the burden of this Discourse; "or if there is, it is not so good as the old." Inspiration in Art he quietly laughs at; "genius," he ventures to affirm, "is the child of imitation." It is "by imitation only, that variety, and even originality of invention, is produced." This seeming paradox he most ingeniously proves, and then proceeds to define the true limits of imitation and borrowing. He sees clearly enough that imitation is very likely to degenerate into a mere reproduction of peculiarities, or a feeble plagiarism. But he insists that "the sagacious imitator does not content himself with merely remarking what distinguishes the different manner or genius of each master; he enters into the contrivance of the composition—how the masses of lights are disposed; . . . . he admires, not the harmony of colouring alone, but examines by what artifice one colour is a foil to its neighbour." The defence of imitation was never better put than in Sir Joshua's words: "What is learned in this manner from the works of others becomes really our own, sinks deep, and is never forgotten; nay, it is by seizing on this clue that we proceed forward, and get further and further in enlarging the principles and improving the practice of our art." The true imitator is eclectic in his tastes: he will not copy the crudity of Rubens, or the want of proportion of Correggio, but, like Raphael, he will take many models, and not one guide alone to the exclusion of others. Thus there will be no servility in the imitator, and the quality which will enable a painter to know what to imitate, and why, is closely akin to genius, if it be not genius itself.

In his seventh Discourse the President dwells on the fact that there is "a standard of Taste, as well as of corporal Beauty,"

but perhaps the most interesting part of the lecture is that in which he enumerates the qualifications necessary for the painter to possess. Industry of the mind must be joined to industry of the hand; for "he can never be a great artist, who is grossly illiterate." He must imbibe a poetic spirit, he must study human nature, if he wishes to excel. "Reading, if it can be made the favourite recreation of his leisure hours, will improve and enlarge his mind, without retarding his actual industry. What such partial and desultory reading cannot afford, may be supplied by the conversation of learned and ingenious men, of whom there are many in this age."

The eighth Discourse has for its subject Moderation. Excess is bad, and particularly to be avoided by artists, in colour, light and shade, and attitude. Rigid rules or minute details are worse than absurd; general principles of art, admitting often of modification, are all that a lecturer can lay down. It is the strict following of laws useful, but not infallible, of wide but not universal application, which has so often led painters into excess.

Of the next five Discourses I can do nothing more than enumerate the subjects. The ninth deals with the "advantages accruing to society from cultivating intellectual pleasure." The tenth is on Sculpture; the eleventh on Genius, which, according to Reynolds, "consists principally in the comprehension of a whole; in taking general ideas only."

The twelfth Discourse teaches that particular methods of study are of little consequence; while the thirteenth is in some degree a complement to the sixth, and shows art to be, "not merely imitation, but under the direction of the imagination."

The fourteenth Discourse possesses a peculiar interest, as it deals with the character of Gainsborough, who had died just previously to the annual meeting of the Academy. No greater honour could have been paid to the deceased painter than that he should thus have been selected as the subject of discourse by his great rival. High is the praise that Reynolds bestows

upon him. "If ever," he says, "this nation should produce genius sufficient to acquire to us the honourable distinction of an English school, the name of Gainsborough will be transmitted to posterity in the history of the art, among the very first of that rising name." . . . "Upon the whole, we may justly say, that whatever he attempted, he carried to a high degree of excellence." Gainsborough's intense love for his art, his keen appreciation of beauty, his great judgment in the selection of subjects, and his untiring application, are all dwelt upon with generous appreciation. And though the President thinks it necessary to warn the students against copying Gainsborough's mannerisms, he admits that in the master these defects become almost beauties. Sir Joshua, the man of culture and refinement, saw clearly enough what the other lacked, but this great deficiency—this absence of poetic feeling—is only lightly touched upon. The Discourse is a model which all critics would do well to follow: it is not a panegyric, there is nothing fulsome in it, but there is the genuine, hearty praise that a noble spirit alone can give.

The last Discourse was not delivered till December, 1790, after Reynolds had ceased practice, and after the quarrel with the Academicians had been made up. The early part is devoted to a review of his connection with the Academy, of which he feels he is now taking farewell. He then speaks of his Discourses, apologising for their defects, but declaring his purpose to have been, not the promulgation of any novel theories, or "unfledged opinions," but the inculcation of rules which have commended themselves to the experience of past ages, and which have been followed by "the most approved painters." Thus, as he truly says, though he made no new discoveries, he "succeeded in establishing the rules and principles of Art on a more firm and lasting foundation than that on which they had formerly been placed."

But the greater portion of the Discourse is taken up with a panegyric on Michael Angelo. But he does not venture to

attempt the style of that great master; it is as his admirer rather than his imitator that he appears. He acknowledges that the course he has taken is more suited to his abilities and the taste of the age; "yet," he adds, with genuine enthusiasm, "were I now to begin the world again, I would tread in the steps of that great master: to kiss the hem of his garment, to catch the slightest of his perfections, would be glory and distinction enough for an ambitious man. I feel a self-congratulation in knowing myself capable of such sensations as he intended to excite. I reflect, not without vanity, that these Discourses bear testimony of my admiration of that truly divine man; and I should desire that the last words which I should pronounce in this Academy, and from this place, might be the name of Michael Angelo."

And these were the last words Sir Joshua was to utter from the chair he had so adorned, for though he lived for more than a year after the delivery of this Discourse, his health forbade his ever again attempting an appearance in public.

Besides the *Idlers* and the Discourses, we have among Reynolds' 'works' an account of his journey to the Low Countries in 1781. Of the actual incidents of the tour, or the impressions made upon the travellers, we get few details; but we have what is far more important and interesting—Sir Joshua's notes on all the great pictures of the Flemish School. It is Rubens, naturally, who attracts him the most; and his criticisms on that painter are very full and valuable; and though a staunch adherent of the Italian School, he is impartial enough to assert that "those who cannot see the extraordinary merit of this great painter, either have a narrow conception of the variety of Art, or are led away by affectation." The colouring of Weeninx, the freshness of Ruysdael, the manly style of Jan Steen, and the handling of Teniers, receive high praise from this most catholic-minded of artists.

But Reynolds was more than an art-critic: we have a sketch from his pen which for quiet humour and delicate parody is

hardly inferior to anything in our literature. Johnson's relations with his fellow-townsman, Garrick, are singularly characteristic of that obstinate, prejudiced, but generous-hearted man. He had affected to despise Garrick, and may very likely have been really jealous of the extraordinary fame the actor had acquired. At first he had strongly opposed Garrick's introduction into the Club, and sneered at the 'player' as a being not worthy of such a society. But the more he knew Garrick, the more he discovered that he was more than an actor—that he was a man of commanding genius, of ready wit, and of kindly heart. And so it came to pass, as Reynolds said, that the Doctor got to consider Garrick as his property, and would never suffer any one to praise or abuse him but himself. For any one to suggest that Garrick was no great actor, but merely a good mimic, was enough to make Johnson wax eloquent in his defence, and attribute to him all the talents under the sun; while, on the other hand, an assertion that Garrick possessed extraordinary and magnificent genius, gave the cue to Johnson, who forthwith proceeded to depreciate the actor, and contend that he was nothing more than 'a clever fellow.'

This habit of contradiction and exclusive patronage of Garrick, in which Johnson loved to indulge, has been admirably hit off by Reynolds in two imaginary dialogues. In the first of these, Sir Joshua begins by praising Garrick, and asserts that he was "a very great man." This is enough to draw Johnson out, who retorts, *more suo*, "Garrick, sir, may be a great man in your opinion, as far as I know, but he was not so in mine; little things are great to little men." And so he goes on, Reynolds in vain striving to get a word in edgeways, and Johnson becoming more dogmatic every minute. "There are various kinds of greatness," he contends; "a man may be a great tobacconist, a man may be a great painter, he may be likewise a great mimic; now you may be the one, and Garrick the other, and yet neither of you be great men." Reynolds

attempts to show that the Doctor has often expressed diametrically opposite opinions about Garrick, but Johnson refuses to listen, and closes the discussion by exclaiming, "Have done, sir; the company you see are tired, as well as myself;" and thus the dialogue ends.

The other side is shown in a conversation between Johnson and Gibbon, where the Doctor indulges in the most extravagant praise of Garrick. He is to actors what Homer is to poets, while in the lighter kinds of poetry he is, "if not the first, in the very first class." His manners were most polished, his sensibility extreme, his generosity lavish. As a man and as an actor he was alike admirable.

In these dialogues Johnson is drawn to the life: it is no caricature, as those who know their Boswell will admit. The subject of the satire would have been the first to have acknowleged its truth. To possess more of such sketches, we would willingly give up the "Continence of Scipio" and the "Cymon." But Sir Joshua had no ambition for a literary fame, and this delicious little satire was probably never intended for publication, but only for private circulation in the Club. It was, however, preserved among his papers, and was printed after his death by the Marchioness of Thomond, and bears conclusive testimony to the fact that Reynolds has claims to be considered a man of letters, as well as an artist; and we may endorse his friend Courtenay's opinion, that "Reynolds' pen with Reynolds' pencil vies."

Such, then, as painter, writer, and man, was Sir Joshua Reynolds—a man of whom England may well be proud. His is one of the very few instances in which an epitaph is alike extremely eulogistic and perfectly truthful. The art of writing monumental inscriptions is, I fear, a lost one; and so my readers may complain that I inflict upon them so lengthy an epitaph. But I take it that, as a novel must, of necessity, end with a wedding, so a biography should end with an epitaph; and I may, moreover, plead in extenuation that I give my

patient reader Northcote's English instead of Knight's Latin:—

TO

SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS,

CONFESSEDLY THE FIRST ARTIST OF HIS TIME;
SCARCELY INFERIOR TO ANY OF THE ANCIENTS IN THE SPLENDOUR
AND COMBINATION OF COLOURS,
IN THE ALTERNATE SUCCESSION OF LIGHT AND SHADE
MUTUALLY DISPLAYING EACH OTHER;
WHO,
WHILST HE ENJOYED WITH MODESTY THE FIRST HONOURS OF HIS ART,
WAS EQUALLY COMMENDED
FOR THE SUAVITY OF HIS MANNERS AND THE ELEGANCE OF HIS MIND,
WHO RESTORED, BY HIS HIGHLY BEAUTIFUL MODELS,
THE ART ITSELF LANGUISHING AND ALMOST EXTINGUISHED
IN EVERY PART OF THE WORLD,
WHO ILLUSTRATED IT BY THE ADMIRABLE PRECEPTS CONTAINED
IN HIS WRITINGS,
AND TRANSMITTED IT IN A CORRECT AND REFINED STATE
TO BE CULTIVATED BY POSTERITY,

THE FRIENDS AND ADMIRERS OF HIS TALENTS
HAVE RAISED THIS MONUMENT.

1813.

PICTURES BY SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS.

There are now in the National Gallery twenty-three of Sir Joshua's paintings, which, fortunately, illustrate every variety of the art he practised. Among them are The Holy Family, The Banished Lord; Portraits of Admiral Keppel, Lord Heathfield, Lord Ligonier (on horseback), Dr. Johnson, the Marchioness of Townsend and her sisters, and the Hon. Mrs. Musters, The Snake in the Grass; The Infant Samuel, Heads of Angels, Age of Innocence, and Robinetta; and there are several more of his masterpieces in the Dulwich Gallery. His pictures are extremely numerous, and are met with in almost every mansion in England. There are about 700 prints after them by McArdell, John Raphael Smith, Valentine Green, J. Watson, E. Fisher, and other celebrated engravers of the day; and fine examples realize very large prices whenever they are sold by auction.

As it would be impossible to give a list of his paintings this volume, the reader is referred to the LIFE AND TIMES OF SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS, by C. R. Leslie, R.A., and Tom Taylor, M.A., which contains an almost exhaustive account of

his works, and to the manuscript catalogue which has been prepared from Sir Joshua's own note-books and ledgers by Mr. Algernon Graves of 6, Pall Mall, who will gladly give any information on the subject of the Reynolds pictures that he is able to supply.

THE INFANT HERCULES. (See page 83.)

INDEX.

(*The names of persons and subjects painted by Reynolds are in italics.*)

Abington, Mrs., 72, 78.

Baldwin, Mrs., 72.
Barnard, Dr., 49.
Barry, James, 75.
Beattie, Dr., 49.
Beauclerk, Topham, 42.
Beaufort, Cardinal, 85.
Blakeney, Gen., 12.
Bonomi, 93.
Boothby, Penelope, 86.
Boswell, James, 81.
Boydell, Alderman, 84.
Braddyll, Mrs., 86.
Bunbury, Lady Sarah, 27, 34.
Bunbury, Master, 70.
Burke, Edmund, 31, 98.

Catherine, Empress of Russia, 83, 90.
Charlotte, Queen, 42, 68.
Club, The, 30.
Club, The Artists', 8.
Cockburn, Lady, 50.
Coventry, Lady, 15.
Crewe, Master, 54.
Crewe, Mrs., 45.
Cymon and Iphigenia, 89.

Daschaw, Princess, 82.
Dilettanti Society, The, 63.
Discourses, The, 103.

Edgcumbe, Richard, Lord, 5.

Fisher, Kitty, 22.
Flanders, Reynolds' Trip to, 69.
Fox, Charles James, 78.
France, Reynolds in, 55.
Fresnoy, Du, 74.

Gainsborough, Thomas, 39, 51, 86, 107.
Gallwey, Mrs. Payne, 65.
Gandy, William, 9.
Garrick, David, 21, 62, 110.
George III., 21, 23, 68.
Gibbon, Edward, 67.
Goldsmith, Oliver, 30, 41, 50.
Gordon, Frances, 61.
Granby, Marquis of, 34.
Gwatkin, Theophila, 87.

Hamilton, Duchess of, 15.
Hawkins, Sir J., 32.
Heathfield, Lord, 85.
Hercules, The Infant, 83, 91.
Hone, Nathaniel, 52.
Hudson, Thomas, 5, 14, 66.
Hunter, John, 82.

Idler, The, 101.
Incorporated Society of Artists, The, 37.
Italy, Reynolds in, 12.

Johnson, Dr., 28, 80, 110.

Kauffmann, Angelica, 34, 38.

Keppel, Commodore (afterwards *Lord*), 11, 15, 65.
Kirkley, Ralph, 96.

Langton, Bennet, 32, 81.
Lennox, Lady Sarah, 27, 34.
Ligonier, Lord, 24.
Lowe, Mauritius, 71.

Manchester, Duchess of, 40.
Marlborough Family, The, 64.
Mason, Rev. W., 16, 73.
Michelangelo, 108.
Minorca, Reynolds at, 12.
Monckton, Miss, 66.
More, Hannah, 59.
Morris, Miss, 40.
Moser, G. M., 36, 74.
Mudge, Dr. John, 26, 35.
Mudge, Dr. Z., 26.
Mudge, Master, 20.

New College Chapel, Oxford, 65.
Northcote, James, 43, 56.

O'Brien, Nelly, 24, 26.
Omiah, 62.
Opie, John, 73.
Orleans, Duke of, 81.
Ossory, Lady, 94.

Paine, Thomas, 35.
Palmer, Theophila, 47, 72.
Plympton-Earl, 1, 33.

Reynolds, Miss, 15.
Reynolds, Rev. S., 2, 8.
Robinson, Bishop, 53.
Robinson, Mrs., 72.
Romney, George, 39, 51.
Royal Academy, The, 38, 91.
Russell Family, The, 56.

St. Paul's Cathedral, Decoration of, 48.
Samuel, The Infant, 59.
Sheridan, Mrs., 53.
Sheridan, Richard Brinsley, 88.
Siddons, Mrs., 78.
Society of Arts, The, 23.
Sterne, Lawrence, 28.
Strawberry Girl, The, 47.

Terrick, Bishop, 48.
Thurlow, Lord, 72.

Ugolino, 42, 46.

Waldegrave, Countess, 25, 27.
Waldegrave, The Ladies, 67.
Walpole, Horace, 45, 88.
Warton, Dr. T., 77.
Wolcot, Dr. John, 73.

Yorke, Master, 84.

Zoffany, Johan, 45.

Hazell, Watson, and Viney, Printers, London and Aylesbury.

00023633

Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 18 July, 2018